

IRELAND IN TRAVAIL

TO
E. A. N.
AND
G. M. L.

IRELAND IN TRAVAIL

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IRELAND IN TRAVAIL

CHAPTER I

47—AGENT

IN the wonderful August weather of 1920, my wife and I were in our London flat sighing for cooler places. The season had come to an end with less than its usual glory, and for days taxis and growlers, topheavy with luggage, had been carrying fleeing Londoners to country and to sea. The holidays had begun; but England, still limping from the late war, had lost the holiday spirit: indeed the world was restless as if it had come through painful convulsions to kick spasmodically for a while. We were restless too.

Ireland was one of the world's sores. It was near at hand. Should we go and see for ourselves? The middle of August had come, and we could not make up our minds.

On the hottest of those mornings I wandered into Hyde Park, and where the riders turn their horses about, on the very last chair of the row, leaning forward, rubbing his chin on his stick, I came across 47—Agent of the secret service. He

had seen me coming along, and patted the next seat in invitation as if we had met yesterday.

"I thought you were at the other end of the world."

He answered, "I'm here."

How I met 47; how it came about that he revealed his secret to me; how it was that we became friends, has nothing to do with this story. Sometimes I saw a lot of him; sometimes he passed out of my life for a year.

Before I had known 47 six months I had learned this, that a secret service agent, if he is to be more than a common spy, what the French term a *mouchard*, a fellow who gleans his news among servant girls and the like, must have something of a statesman's vision to carry him on his way. He must have that sense of the future which lifts him beyond the individual and the matter of the moment to think in nations and down centuries. Thus is lessened the pang he feels as he bruises the individual, as the vivisectionist tortures the beast that beasts and men shall be freed of pain.

"Come to dinner to-night," I said. "We are always talking of you."

"I'm crossing to Ireland to-night."

"Ireland? Are you working there?"

He nodded. "I'm going to make a beginning. All the fellows who are resting have been called up. Things are going from bad to worse."

"Are they worse than the papers make out?"

"They are bad enough. I've not seen for

myself yet ; but the Irish Republican Army has grown into a moderately disciplined and fairly numerous fighting affair, and seems to be getting bolder. Thousands of the young men belong to it. They don't wear uniform, and those who aren't known to the military and police, and so aren't on the run, live as ordinary citizens until they are called on for some stunt. They're a secret organisation, and we ought to be the people for them."

"Are you glad to be off ?" I said.

"Damn glad," he answered. "I'll be able to see for myself. One man tells you the country is in the clutches of a murder gang, and the next that some nobler spasm convulses it. All the same I hear work in Ireland is trickier than Continental stunts. On the Continent you have the majority of the nation indifferent to you, and only the official part to circumvent ; but in Ireland they say half the nation is waiting to give a man away."

"Why didn't you come and say you were off ?"

"I got orders this morning."

"We have been thinking of having a look at Ireland. My wife's interested in adoption work, and wants to start it over there. We can't make up our minds."

He looked round. "You ?"

"Both of us. D'you think we'd find it worth while ?"

"Probably. Why not come over ? You're people with nothing to do."

"If we do, we're going to be strictly neutral," I said. "We want to meet the other side."

He nodded. "It's not always easy. That's what a good many want to do. You may do it if you stay neutral."

"We're going to do it."

"Then make up your minds. You're sure to run across me if you come to Dublin." He looked at the watch on his wrist and said, "I must go." But he did not get up.

"You've got the pip," I said.

"I'm glad to be on the road," he answered, rubbing his chin on his stick again; "but it's a solemn business." He became suddenly very stern. "An agent requires a better courage than a soldier's. Once he enters enemy country he does not hear a word in favour of his cause. The very newspapers he must read denounce the Government whose servant he is. Day after day he wages his lonely war.

"The man I meet at the Hibernian Hotel at twelve o'clock to-morrow is to be my 'cousin,' as we call it. It is my privilege to pour into his ears all my troubles, and he will do his best for me. Once a day, once or twice a week as may be arranged, he will appear at this place or that place at such and such an hour to take my information. This information he will pass on to another man, and this third man is the link with Dublin Castle.

"My wife and I will have no other loyal acquaintances, no other person in sympathy with

us. While the Irish situation stays as it is we shall have only each other to lean on. Now and again we may pass an acquaintance in the street, and we shall go by without a word, without a nod. How many times must we join in the laugh against us ? How many times must we sneer when we love ? How many times must we applaud when we scorn ? ”

He looked in front of him and said in a low voice, “ Betray once more, 47, that a traitor may be destroyed. Deny once again, 47, that a liar’s mouth may be stopped. Listen this time, 47, that some one else shall listen no more. Stifle your humanity. Fight your lonely fight.”

He got up, nodded, and departed.

I returned to lunch and told my wife I had come across 47. She was thrilled now at the idea of Ireland, and when lunch was over we had nearly made up our minds. I had to leave her in the evening, it was the case of a theatre, and as I walked out of that same theatre, somebody was at my side. He was the only other secret service man I knew ; the introduction had come through 47. Such is life.

He was resplendent. The background of lights and women and motors purring at the kerb was just what he wanted. We strolled back together along Piccadilly, and he was in his best vein. He asked after my wife, and from her he got on to women in general. He began to philosophise presently and said :

“ You can’t beat a really good woman.” Then

he shook his head. "But most women are the devil."

"Not all."

"Most."

He drew up his lip like a dog.

"I remember once in Vienna there was an actress, an agent of the Austrian Government, who was so dangerous that one after another of our fellows had to pull out half-way because they were losing their heads." He nodded and went on showing his eye-tooth. "But one day there came along an agent less susceptible than the others and—he broke her neck."

"One of her unlucky days?"

"Yes, he broke her neck."

There was a pause.

"The clock was over there. This agent looked at it, and it had long gone midnight. She had been home from the theatre some time. The supper things were on the table: supper was over. She was standing in the middle of the room, and when she heard him coming up behind, she leaned back bored for an embrace. She was unused to a refusal. She had in mind to suck this man dry and afterwards toss him away like an empty wine bottle. She put her head back, smiling. He slipped his arm round her neck and—it's not difficult if you know the way."

This man had the most wonderful personality in the world. He grew more and more splendid all the time.

“ He who runs may read. In our service a man receives certain payments for his harassing life. The agent lives two lives at one and the same time. He lives the life of the citizen, pays his milk bill, shops with his women friends, breakfasts, lunches, dines, and all the time he is living a second life below the surface. He sees the moves in the war raging about him ; he remarks man after man go down. There is no cry. These are the deaths that never get into the papers. If recorded at all they are recorded as accidents or found dead. He sees the messages passed at the street corners, and the friend strolling at his side sees one man giving another a light. He sees this wanted man go by, he sees that sign put up, he asks himself why is this man here, what is that woman doing there ? And his friend recognises only the beggar girl whining on the doorstep, and the cabman flourishing his whip.”

We were passing under a street lamp. He had become magnificent. His eyes were shining. He had swollen like a pouter pigeon.

“ When the time comes for us to leave the service we cannot. We are offered rest, we are offered peace ; at last has come opportunity for our stretched nerves to recover. But we must continue to be *au courant* with affairs. So nearly every agent dies in harness.

“ But, of course, besides receiving payment, an agent pays for this life. He makes payment in several ways. One way is that he finally comes to

believe nothing, to trust nobody. He weighs up what his best friend says. And another payment is that the life brings a man in the end to neutral feelings. He is cold sometimes—yes. Wet—yes. Tired—yes. Even a little depressed sometimes. But not elated. Never surprised.

“It’s fifteen years since I was surprised.”

And then at Hyde Park Corner, the place where I had last seen 47, he was gone, and I was left to stroll home alone.

My wife was still up.

“I’ve just met our other friend,” I said, shutting the door.

“What does he say?”

“He’s going over in a day or two. He was at the top of his form.”

Then I gave out what I had been given, and she listened with her eyes jumping out of her head. Her mind, and accordingly my mind, was made up half-way through. At the end she jerked upright in the armchair and cried—

“But let’s go and see for ourselves, and I’ll try and get my ‘Baby Exchange’ going. Let’s.”

“By all means.”

This was very late at night or very early in the morning.

Now it is time to ask if the world possesses one true history book. History can only be approximate, for events are without limit, and man is limited. Each observer of Irish affairs has been watching Ireland through the windows of his

temperament and his opportunities, and where a man has seen this thing, his neighbour has seen another.

Humbly, then, we put down what we have to tell, endeavouring to fill these pages with the spirit of the times rather than with a tedious list of events.

CHAPTER II

WE CROSS TO DUBLIN

“ANY firearms?” A lamp flashed on a pair of khaki legs. “Any firearms?” asked the man with the lamp again in a feeble attempt at cheerfulness.

I was trying to be cheerful too; but it was the middle of the night and very cold, and I had lost a husband.

A soft cloud of steam rose from the engine of the train that had just disgorged me.

All along the platform were weary passengers and flashing lamps. A silk stocking slid to the platform from my suitcase. The stooping Customs man bumped his finger on a darning-needle and muttered under his breath. A little farther along the platform I could see a woman burdened with a baby struggling to shut an over full portmanteau.

“Why are you going to Ireland?” grumbled the man with the lamp. “Last place to live in. Right. Next, please. One minute, Paddy. What’s in that parcel?”

A youth who was trying to slip through the crowd stood sullenly.

I was jostled up a gangway by the moving people, still clutching my keys.

The boat was crowded. It seemed impossible that any one else could get on, and there were hundreds to come.

My belated husband had deserted me in the confusion. I picked him up presently on the boat.

“Have you seen about a berth?” he asked.

I shook my head and penetrated to the women’s cabin. It was the most uncomfortable place I had ever seen. I struggled past heaps of rugs and luggage, and stumbled over legs as far as the stewardess, an overworked woman, who answered me impolitely. There was no berth left, and I struggled up to the deck again through the descending people with my heart in my boots. There was nothing but a cold, hard seat and the whistling wind.

Scraps of conversation reached us in between the noises. People who had fared as badly as we had stood about in sulky groups. Dour Northerners clustered together and eyed a party of priests. On the hatches some Tommies lifted up their voices in song, and round the deck paced military officers with suffering faces.

It was an evil night.

In the early morning I, who had never thought to see a dawn again, caught a glimpse of Dublin Bay.

The shattered boatload poured along the platform. I stood by the small luggage while my

husband went to pounce on the rest from the hold. A long-lipped porter weighed up my wealth.

“What time does the train go?”

“Half-seven.”

“It’s been a choppy night.”

“It has.” An Irishman never says yes or no. I learned that quickly. “Here’s himself coming back.”

My husband turned up. “You’ve been christened Himself,” I said. “I’m going to call you that while we’re in Ireland.”

“Do you feel pretty bad?” he answered.

“Awful.” I subsided on an unknown person’s luggage. Himself wandered about, and the long-lipped porter, having decided we were worth while, wandered after him doing as little as possible.

I was put into a train, and from that train we emerged at last. Himself went to get a garry, and once more I did sentinel duty over the luggage.

A youth with a dirty grey cap pulled over his eyes and a trench coat on eyed me from behind a pillar-box. I stared back and he seemed to retire. Presently I saw his head round the other side of the pillar-box. He chewed a small green leaf.

We piled our things up on the garry. The soft clean air curled round my face and I breathed contentedly.

The jarvey was a cheerful soul, and was prepared to be talkative as we balanced ourselves on the side of his swaying car. The youth who was

chewing a leaf propped himself against a lamp-post and watched our departure. I wondered why we fascinated him.

"Sure," said the jarvey, "I don't know how I stand at all, at all, not from one minute to another. It's this way, mum. First a Shinner comes along and sez he, 'Jarvey, did ye drive a military man home last night?' 'Faith,' sez I, 'and how should I be after knowing if he was military or not?' 'It's up to you, jarvey,' sez he, 'and mighty quick, too,' and out he pulls a bit iv a gun and sticks it in my stomach. And, mum, what is a poor jarvey to do? Then up comes another man. 'Jarvey,' sez he, 'that was a Shinner you was talking to. What were you after telling him?' 'He was no Shinner,' sez I. 'Glory be, how am I to know his persuasion?' 'It's lies,' he sez quick like, 'all lies, jarvey, and you find the damn truth or it'll be worse for ye,' and out comes another gun and into the stomach of me. Och, it's bad days, and it's not I who be caring how soon peace comes."

"You don't like either side, then?"

"Like thim? Now what I'm telling you is true. It was half-twelve the other night, and I was coming home——"

"After curfew?"

"It was. They let jarveys through. It was half-twelve and I was coming home, when up runs a man with a gun and on to my car. 'Drive, jarvey,' he sez, 'back along the road you've come.'

So I whips me horse and away we go. We had gone a goodish bit when we sees the light of an armoured car. Out skips the man. 'Your life if ye split,' he sez, and disappears in the dark.

"The car spotted me at once. 'What are ye doing at this time iv night?' sez the officer. 'I'm going back to me stables,' sez I. 'Where are your stables?' sez he. 'Leeson Lane,' sez I. 'Then it do be away from your stables you are going,' sez he. 'Get out iv that car, jarvey,' and all the guns in the armoured car poked round at me.

"Sure it was two lorry loads iv military by this time. 'Take him home,' sez one, 'and let him go. He's only a poor old jarvey.' 'Poor old jarvey be damned,' sez the other, 'it's Mike Collins himself maybe.' 'Have ye seen Mike Collins, jarvey?' sez the other. 'How should I be after knowing him?' sez I. 'Who was the fare you put down?' 'There was no fare,' I sez. 'I took a party home and was going back to stables and I fell asleep. The old mare must have turned herself round.'

"They laughed at that, and the Black-and-Tans was all for running me into the Castle; but the military, God save them, was for me being just a poor old jarvey, and they stood by me and jumped me into the car and drove me back to stables to see who I was, and then they took me back to the old mare and let me go. Och, but it was a night what with one and another, and it was after curfew when I was home, I was that tormented with them all. They pulled me up every short way and jumped me

into a car to see who I was and then back again to the old mare. It's no time for a jarvey, mum."

We were rattling along the Liffey. The tide was out and the few seagulls were investigating the city's discarded biscuit tins in the mud on either side of the water. All along the embankment were men—old men, young men, boys. They propped the walls, they dozed upon the bridges, they watched the Guinness brewery carts rumbling backwards and forwards. Some looked at us with blank faces ; but the majority looked into the mud that the tide had left.

Finally we reached the hotel just as I was beginning to understand the jarvey's speech.

"How much?" Himself let the coins in his pocket jingle.

"Four shillings." The reply was given unblushingly. I could see the hotel porter reckoning his tip.

We had a large room looking down on the main street. A stream of people passed.

"Give a poor old woman a penny, sir," I heard a beggar woman whine. "Mother iv God! a penny for the poor old woman." She headed a man off, running in front of him and jerking the head of a wretched baby as she ran. "A penny for the love of God!"

The man escaped to be waylaid by two others.

"What a lot of fat beggars!" I exclaimed.

The chambermaid walked listlessly to the window and looked out. A man in well cut

clothes had tossed a penny to the ground, and the beggars had fallen upon it.

“Those men do be spotters,” said the chambermaid for my benefit.

“Spotters? What do you mean?”

“Spies,” she answered briefly.

“How can you tell?”

She sniffed. “They’re not Dublin. They’re military. Will you be taking your breakfast here or downstairs?”

“Here, thanks. And get me a bath ready. I’ll go to bed for a bit.”

The stream of people increased as I watched. It was a listless stream. The only thing in a hurry was a lorry of armed soldiers jostling at breakneck speed through the traffic.

“For the Lord’s sake, let’s get some breakfast!” Himself exclaimed in the middle of my watch.

CHAPTER III

I COME ACROSS 47

It was past eleven o'clock when I left my wife and wandered out of the hotel and across O'Connell Bridge. The tide was high, and something about the lights that lay upon the Liffey waters, and something about the numerous bridges spanning the river, brought me dreams of Venice.

It is said there is truth in first impressions. I had a first impression of Dublin then. In that shining summer weather the city, which was at once so pleasantly conceived and so down at heels, impressed me as some likeable person fallen upon a sick bed.

Was it that I was reading into the face of the city what I expected to see? I had wondered at the suspicion of the guests in the hotel, who sat surly and apart. Now against the embankment of the river shabby men and youths leaned, cooling their heels. They smoked and spat and contemplated the traffic, which was controlled by magnificent policemen as tall as trees. There appeared to be a barbers' strike in progress, as outside the barber's shop loitered sundry young men who

would have been the better for a shave. These people displayed a board with "Strike on Here" printed in big letters, and whenever some customer, maddened by a two months' growth of hair, vanished into the shop, they would shout after him in raucous tones, "Strike on there!"

The crowd looked worried and suspicious of itself, and surely it was evident to him who had eyes to see that war, none the less real because waged below the surface, was going on, and nobody knew who was for this side and who for the other.

Yes, war—rumbling through the streets in the guise of heavy military waggons, tramping round the corners in parties of tin-hatted soldiers, flying up and down the quays in lorries choked with dapper-looking men wearing Balmoral bonnets, rushing up this road and that in Crossley tenders, filled with less romantic men in black uniforms and peaked caps.

I passed over O'Connell Bridge, up Westmoreland Street, and out of it between two grave stone buildings; that across the way an eloquent curving place, once a parliament, and now suffering from a changed greatness as the Bank of Ireland; this, to my left, the grave grey face of Trinity, with its arch like a mouth, through which could be seen cobbled walks removed from the wear and tear of the rest of the city.

Then to the left and up Dawson Street, past the Mansion House, an uninspired building, into one of the noble squares that the city possesses.

The heart of this square was a public garden called Stephen's Green. I crossed the road, which was wide and straight, and entered the park by a little gate in the iron railings.

The sun poured out of the sky, and the place was full of nurses and babies. Two lakes, divided by a bridge, filled all the centre of the place, and ducks and seagulls and small children disputed for bits of bread round the edges. It was the scene one meets in all city parks; but it was specially charming owing to the sun and the twisting walks.

I was looking for a chair when I discovered 47 strolling down the path. He had seen me; he always saw me first. He looked just the same as when we had said good-bye at Hyde Park Corner.

"So you came over?" he said.

"Yes."

"You'll find it worth while."

The place was the best in the gardens for a talk. Two chairs were beside us. We sat down with mutual consent.

"I have been over a week," he said. "I put up at the Gresham. That's in Sackville Street. I had to get in touch first thing. I was to meet my 'cousin' in the lounge of the Hibernian Hotel, Dawson Street, at a quarter to twelve. After a talk with him I would know the lie of the land better, and be in a position to set to work at once. A fellow learns from experience how to cast the net as quickly and as widely as possible."

“How do you mean?”

“The commercial traveller bustles from business house to business house, finds his way into the different billiard saloons, tests the merits of the bars. The other people get going in their own ways.”

“I’ve never seen you in a hurry.”

“Never be in a hurry. Don’t delay in preparing the ground; but when that is done the experienced fellow sits like a man beneath a tree, waiting for the ripe fruit to drop into his lap. He has a golden rule, which he never breaks. It is, do not ask a direct question. What he must know must be found out indirectly while he is yawning and showing at best a polite interest. So it follows his informant forgets what has been said; but he does not forget.”

“Well,” I said, “what happened?”

“I found the hotel, which has a sort of Moorish lounge, and got a seat where I could see everybody, the door among other things. It was twenty minutes to twelve, five minutes to the time. I asked for nobody, I did not even ask for a drink, as I did not want my voice to proclaim me an Englishman and a stranger. I knew my ‘cousin’ would be on time, for time with us is sacred.”

He leant forward in his old way, and began rubbing his chin on his stick. It meant he was going to hold forth.

“Time, exact time, is sacred. On Tuesday

morning, at twelve o'clock by the nearest public time, Agent 1 will push his barrow round a certain corner. At the same time Agent 2, who is cycling round the same corner at the same moment but from an opposite direction, collides with Agent 1, and in the fracas which ensues they are hemmed in by the crowd. Agent 3, who has been detailed to do a little business on the other side of the road at two minutes past twelve, is agreeably surprised to find everybody occupied on the opposite pavement and nobody watching him. At four minutes past twelve a motor car numbered with a certain number slows up at a certain bit of kerb, and Agent 3, who has transacted his little business, gets in. But if Agent 1 is late, Agent 2 has no man to collide with, no crowd is drawn to look on, Agent 3 finds it impossible to transact his bit of business, and Agent 4 slows his car up in vain. Somebody is going to get into trouble.

"The few people in the lounge seemed the tag ends of Horse Show week. There were three or four women and half a dozen men, and they sat over cocktails and coffee. Nobody was interested in me.

"At one minute to the hour I sat back and put up the sign, and a minute later a man stalked through the door from the street. He took in the room in a single aimless glance, and, still walking forward, answered my sign. He smiled, I rose, and we met as if we were friends expecting each other. We made the third sign, the one that is

made with the foot, and he asked the passwords and I answered. This was while we were sitting down. He asked me to have a drink ; but I wasn't having any.

“ ‘ Then come out,’ he said, ‘ for a walk about.’ He made a motion of his finger in the air like a man walking about. He spoke very quietly, and asked questions with his eyebrows.

“ We left the lounge and went down the hotel steps.

“ My ‘ cousin ’ was between thirty and thirty-five. He was tall and very lean. His chest was narrow, and sometimes he looked delicate, and at other times as tough as whipcord. His face was as keen as a wild animal's. His black hair grew backwards. He was inclined to walk on his toes, and he trod like a cat. You never heard him coming and going.

“ He brought me here, and we walked and talked.” 47 jerked his thumb to the left. “ Up that end is a waterfall which feeds the lakes, and all the time we seemed to be getting to that or leaving it. We watched the children if we were disturbed, or talked about the birds, and my ‘ cousin ’—I can't give you his name or number—was mad on them, and had a cupboard at home full of pot plants.”

“ Did he tell you how things are going ? ” I broke in.

47 pondered this. “ He thought there was a lot of work to be done ; but the situation was

getting fairly well in hand. The people over here are fearfully hampered by the powers that be." 47 looked carefully round the gardens without turning his head. "Listen to this," he said, pulling some papers out of his pocket. "Here are one or two choice little extracts from the rules of the Cumann na mBan, the woman's branch of the Irish Republican Army, of which Countess Markievicz is the head. The Countess is said to go about with an armed escort, and to carry a bag with a gun inside. The spring of the bag fires the gun. It may be a legend. Here we are.

"As a start, members have to subscribe to the following declaration: 'I, mindful of my high responsibilities as an Irishwoman, am resolved to do my part in the service of the Republic. I enrol myself as a member of the Cumann na mBan. I bind myself by personal attention to duty as a member of this branch to aim at the highest degree of efficiency which alone will make us a valuable unit in the Republican Army. I pledge myself to keep perfectly secret all matters connected with the Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan,' etc.

"This is what I am after: Rule 11. 'That Cumann na mBan should be instructed in the use of firearms.' Rule 12. 'That Cumann na mBan include detective work and the acquiring of information about the enemy among its activities.'

"Dublin Castle has in its possession a full list of the executive of the Cumann na mBan—this organisation of enemy spies—yet none of these

women are touched, but they are left to go about their work as freely as they like. The Irish Republican Army states that it is at war with Britain; the penalty for spies is death. These women could quite logically be executed; they most certainly should be interned. But no, not a finger must be lifted against them."

"What else did you glean?" I urged.

"That these gardens were much used by the Sinn Feiners. My 'cousin' pointed out a man loitering on a little switchback path over there near the waterfall. He warned me most of us were shadowed now and again, but in most cases it was clumsily done. He warned me Sinn Fein was everywhere, that one could trust nobody, that the rot was even in the army and the police. The question was dividing fathers against sons, and husbands against wives. He urged me to believe in nobody who was not of the brotherhood: he need not have worried on that score.

"I was told to look out for men and women sitting together on the park benches—the man dictating, the woman taking shorthand notes. That's how they often dictate their dispatches.

"My 'cousin' went on to say that after dark motor cyclists carried the Sinn Fein dispatches through the empty streets. One passed his house at great speed at a certain hour every evening, almost to the minute. He meant to get him.

"He told me, as I had guessed, that the bars were the great places for passing information.

Important meetings were held in the houses of trusted people and in the private rooms of hotels with good escapes.

"He ended by announcing the Irish could breed horses, grow flowers, and conspire, and that was the sum total of their qualifications."

47 came to the end of his oration. He had told everything in a level voice, rubbing his chin on the top of his stick all the time.

"That's amusing," I owned. "You must keep me posted."

"You'll be wise not to see too much of us, though we'd both like to have a talk with friends. They may start shadowing me at any time, and it won't be worth your while to be seen in bad company. I'll tell you where I hang out; but don't turn up often. We'll run across each other now and then like this."

"I don't want a bullet into me on your account," I assured him. "Besides, I want to see as much of the other side as I can. Remember, I'm going to keep strictly neutral. Do you hear?"

He grunted something, and did not seem much interested. Then he said—

"What are you doing now?"

"Looking for a flat, I suppose," I answered.

"This is a good part of the town. The flats are very dirty, but you may find something. We were tied to a top floor."

"How's that?"

"The top floor has many advantages, including

the fact that it can be defended better than another floor, and also that nobody has any business on your stairs."

He was getting up as he said this. He waited a moment, said, "We'll run across each other in a day or two. Good luck with your flat."

He nodded, and was gone.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING A ROOF

NEXT morning Himself and I breakfasted early and went flat hunting. We went light-heartedly, not knowing what was before us. I had started with some idea of comfort and cleanliness: I had made up my mind that my life should be comfortable as well as interesting. But that dream was soon dispelled. The flats we saw had never seen brooms since the days of Cuchulan, a man the Irish are very fond of. We were eyed up and down by frowsy maids and dilapidated landladies.

“God knows where we’ll end if we get into any of these!” Himself exclaimed, in the middle of the hunt.

“Now, look here, my poor husband, we must get a flat. It’s the basements that have put us off. Don’t let’s look at basements, let’s just see the possibility of soap and water.”

“That’s a good idea; but what shall we let ourselves in for?”

“We’ve got to die somehow some day.”

We walked along a street in the neighbourhood of Stephen’s Green. Somewhere about the middle,

on the right-hand side, a cab was drawn up, and luggage was being brought out by a bibulous-looking cabman.

"That looks hopeful," Himself said. "Some one is clearing out."

We mounted the steps before the door was shut.

A middle-aged servant stood on the top step, directing the cabman with his last load. She had black hair, an apron, sand-shoes—they had started life white—and her sleeves were rolled up.

"Are there any flats to let here?" I asked hurriedly.

Before replying, she looked us up and down in the Irish way.

"There are," she said, at last. "There do be two, and some one's just after leaving now."

"Can we see any one?"

"You can. Mrs. Slaney's upstairs."

We went inside.

The hall floor was depressing. The stair rods endangered our ascent. The stair carpet had once been red.

"I've not been able to sweep to-day," said the servant. "The mistress was after giving the loan of the broom next door, and it hasn't come back yet."

"Mrs. O'Grady! Mrs. O'Grady!" screamed some one below us. "When do I put the pudden in?"

"Such a girl!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Grady. "She is like a headless cock! It's half-four now,"

she answered. "Use your head ! That girl !" she exclaimed to me indignantly, "she doesn't know the clock. Here you are, mum, a party to see the rooms."

Mrs. Slaney sat with her back to the door, trimming a hat. Her mouth was full of pins. There were drying bulbs spread out on newspapers over the floor.

"Have you a flat to let ?" I asked, as she got up from the chair and came towards us.

"Rooms to let," she corrected with a smile. "Yes, I have rooms to let." She eyed the creases in Himself's trousers. "You're English ? What are you doing in Ireland ?" She tried to question us pleasantly. "You're army, of course ? I don't know that I'd care to let my rooms to army people."

"We are not army people," I assured her. "Nothing to do with it."

"You can't be too careful," declared Mrs. Slaney. "I'm sure you'll understand that. Most of the army people are doing spy work now. At one time they were all right ; but that was before the war. They were gentlemen then."

"I can give you references," I said.

We sat down.

She returned to her chair and faced us. Himself's hand strayed to a book, and he picked it up.

"The Evolution of Sinn Fein ?" he read. "You're interested in Sinn Fein, Mrs. Slaney ?"

"I am," she said emphatically. "Everybody in Ireland is since we were terrorised by the

English army. I'm a Sinn Feiner, and I have been for some time. It is monstrous what England is doing! Monstrous! Ireland will never forget it. Look at all those young fellows that England is murdering. The flower of Ireland! Look at what she's doing to-day!"

"I'm English, as much as I'm anything else," said Himself slowly. "I'm full-blooded British anyway. But I'm interested in Sinn Fein, genuinely interested."

"Then you'll see things here that will make your blood boil. Thank God, my son didn't die in France! How England clamoured about the rights of small nations."

"It's a great pity that there is this feeling," said Himself lamely. "After all, the British Isles are one geographically. They should be friends."

Mrs. Slaney snorted.

"Friends! Ireland can never be friendly. Ireland can't forget. Look how she has been treated. Look what Cromwell did. Look at last Thursday. They arrest the Lord Mayor of Cork—a perfectly innocent man. I suppose they'll treat him the same as Lord Mayor MacCurtain."

"I thought the papers said the Lord Mayor was presiding over an illegal court, and that a stolen police cypher was found, and—oh, lots of other things," I ventured.

"Nonsense! That's Hamar Greenwood and his lie factory. I was talking to Father Murphy, who tells me the Lord Mayor is a perfectly innocent

man. And, look, only the other night those soldiers ran amok on the quays. They're here to terrorise the citizens. But you want to see the rooms ? ”

“ I would like to.”

We went downstairs. Mrs. Slaney trotted busily a pace or two ahead.

“ This is the flat.” She opened a door leading into a sitting-room.

“ Nice and airy,” she declared, bustling towards a window, and vainly trying to put it up. “ I must get that sash fixed. There's a bedroom at the back, and the use of a bathroom.”

“ How much ? ” I asked, in a faltering voice.

“ Three guineas. I give services for that, too. It's cheaper than most flats, and the best situation in Dublin. So near the Green.”

“ What are the services ? ”

“ Mrs. O'Grady is a very good cook—that goes without saying ; and there is a housemaid as well. You dine at night, I suppose ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ I don't like dinner served much after seven. There's Mrs. O'Grady to consider.”

“ It's early,” I said dubiously, “ but I see you must consider the servants. We might think about these rooms.”

“ I'm afraid you must make up your minds about them soon. I have several people after them. Rooms are scarce now.”

“ I vote we take them,” said Himself. “ You'll have them properly cleaned up for us ? ”

"Of course," smiled Mrs. Slaney. "I am always most particular about cleanliness. You'll want them in a few days, I suppose? I can set Mrs. O'Grady to work to-morrow, and I'll have the curtains taken down and the windows cleaned. You could come in the day after."

Himself tried the door.

"The locks are out of order," he said.

"They are," Mrs. Slaney agreed; "but no one bothers about locks here. We're all friends. I've always tried to keep that atmosphere in the house. We need no locks. Until this trouble began, there was not a more crimeless country than Ireland. The front door has never been locked at night since I came into the house."

"I should like these doors to lock," I said sharply. "After all, I understand that the Black-and-Tans raid frequently. It's not nice to feel that they can walk in without warning."

"We can find you keys, of course." She soothed me like a child. "You'll come, then, the day after to-morrow?"

"I'll look in to-morrow, probably, to see what I shall want in the way of odds and ends, and perhaps some of the luggage could come. The heavy stuff has been at the station all this time."

"You'll like Ireland," said Mrs. Slaney to Himself, ignoring my suggestion about the luggage. "You'll find nothing but kindness in the South. You must go to the North for bitterness. It's wonderful, the patience of the Southerners; they've

suffered so much and so long. Eight hundred years ! But at last it has burst out. It couldn't be bottled up any longer. Your blood must boil at the wrongs of Ireland."

"I must hear all you've got to say later."

"Yes. I expect you'll be more Irish than the Irish after a few months. It is always like that with the English who come here. Are you passing a pillar-box ? I'll get you to post a letter as you go out. It will save me a journey. I haven't a stamp in the house, by the way ; but you might perhaps put one on, and we'll make it right next time."

CHAPTER V

WE SETTLE IN

THREE days later we took up our abode with Mrs. Slaney.

She directed our arrival. She was like a busy bird on several twigs. She did not seem able to keep away.

The flat had been imperfectly cleaned ; the curtains had been imperfectly put up ; the window-cleaner had not come, but was coming at some date known only to himself ; the door locks had not been mended.

"There are one or two little items I've overlooked," Mrs. Slaney said. "I make a small charge for cleaning the front hall. I allow Mrs. O'Grady a little extra for that ; and there's coal and light."

She looked at me uncertainly ; but I was not prepared to do battle.

"Mrs. O'Grady hadn't time to clean the fire-place to-day," she said. "She'll do it to-morrow. I've had the walls brushed down. Well," she next said regretfully, "I mustn't disturb you. Let me know if you want anything."

She got as far as the door, then she burst out—

“Look at what the blackguards are doing to the Lord Mayor of Cork! What do you think now of Lloyd George and Hamar Greenwood and their lie factory, starving all those splendid young Irishmen to death in Brixton and in Cork? What must decent Englishmen think?”

I quailed under her eye.

“It’s deliberate, cold-blooded murder. I was a loyalist before 1916. The murder of those splendid young fellows by the British Government after the rebellion caused a thrill of horror through the whole country. Why can’t England leave Ireland alone?”

“It’s a long story,” said Himself.

“A long story! It’s shameful! And all the talk of the rights of small nations.” She quieted a little, and said, “We must have some little talks in the evening. I’ll get Father Murphy to come round. He’s just had Father O’Hara from Cork staying with him, and he’ll be able to give us a little of the truth of what’s going on. Now I must say good-bye.”

This time Mrs. Slaney was as good as her word. I looked round, and found Himself in a trance.

“I wish the doors would lock,” I said bleakly. “Mrs. O’Grady tells me the house is full. I hate the idea of people being able to come in and out as they please. Especially when we’re in bed.”

“No one will hurt you.”

“I hate the feeling that they can prowl in

and out. It's not much to ask that the doors are fixed up."

There was a timid knock. "Come in," I said.

A spikey little girl of fourteen or fifteen came in.

"Who are you?"

"Please, mum, I'm Polly, the housemaid. Mrs. O'Grady wants to know if you want your dinner at half seven."

"Yes, Polly."

"Well, it's half six now, and it's done, and Mrs. O'Grady wants to know what she'll do with it."

"Let it go for to-night," said Himself.

"Bring it in now. But do remember half-past seven in future."

"We'll go for a long walk afterwards," said Himself, trying to cheer me up. "It looks rather interesting along the canal."

We moved mournfully towards the room where our meals were to be served.

"You'll have all you want," Mrs. O'Grady said, cheerfully dusting a small plate with her apron. "The little bell's lost, but you may call from the top of the stairs."

"It's very early for dinner," I said severely.

Mrs. O'Grady sniffed. "It's this way," she said. "That girl's bad with her feet. It comes from running up and down all day for the woman upstairs and wearing fashionable boots. I sez to her, it do be to bed you should be going, and it is the lady who has just moved into the

drawing-room flat is the grand lady, and will not be after keeping you.' "

"She should stay away until she's better," I said decidedly.

"It'd be a charity," declared Mrs. O'Grady, earnestly, but with no sincerity. "But these stairs do be terrible on my legs."

She threw up her hands and withdrew.

Himself was gazing into the soup like *Mélisande*. I, being a philosopher, started on mine at once.

CHAPTER VI

WE MAKE ACQUAINTANCES

HIMSELF and I had got a grip of Dublin at the end of a week by using a map and doing a lot of walking.

All this time Mrs. Slaney was becoming more friendly. She swallowed rebuffs as an ostrich swallows stones.

We began to know by sight the people in the neighbourhood. A number of officers lived in one of the houses. Sometimes they were in uniform, and sometimes in mufti. They went out at night very late, returning during or after curfew as they felt inclined. Usually a car called for them, driven by a soldier, and it brought them back again with a great clatter, when the street was doing its best to sleep. These men carried guns in their pockets.

"Those men are spies," Mrs. Slaney said, coming in to borrow a little butter. "Look at them going out in mufti. Do they think our people are fools? Absurd! The Government lets them go about like that, and expects them to get information."

"They must get information, I suppose," I

said. "After all, if they were no good they wouldn't be kept on."

She threw up her hands.

"The Government pours out money like water!"

The men in this particular house fascinated me. They came and went so often it seemed as if they never slept. There was one individual I found more absorbing than the others. He was about forty, tall and immaculate. His ties and socks were wonderful, his shoes the most beautiful suède, his collar fitted as no other collar I have seen fitted a man, and I am sure he wore stays. On his head was a bowler at an extreme angle. He looked a "wrong un," the sort of person you would not introduce to your daughter. He usually made a first sortie about eleven, and tottered towards the Shelbourne for a cocktail.

Dublin intrigued me. The people are grubby and intellectual, and crafty and philosophic, and sublime and material all at the same time. The fat beggars whine their piteous stories at every corner, and the children tell the tale as glibly as the mothers. Each person is more droll than the next, and nobody really believes anybody else.

Every day provided a new excitement. I have forgotten half of them now; but one I remember clearly. It happened during one of my first walks.

I was coming home across one of the bridges over the canal on the south side of the city. Men, women, and children were peering over into the

water, and I peered too. All I saw were four big, important policemen, who seemed to be guarding the canal.

Then, in the middle of the canal, I discovered a large oil drum floating with the Sinn Fein flag on top. Below the flag was a placard—"Spies and Informers, beware."

While I was still gaping, as was everybody else, a lorry load of troops, with tin hats and rifles, rattled up.

"This is thrilling!" I exclaimed.

At every window was a head, at most two, in some there were half a dozen heads, and the crowd, which had fallen back before the troops, drifted as near as it dared.

The capture of the bridge and the bank of the canal was the matter of moments, and then there was an armistice while two officers, displaying many ribbons, discussed the next stage of the attack.

"Certain to be mined," I heard one declare. "What would be the sense of the Shinnors putting a thing like that there if it wasn't?"

"There may be a dead body attached. Some poor devil gone west," answered the other. He scratched his head. "Let's put a shot into it to make sure."

"Blow the bally canal to bits, what?" declared the first man, gaily. Then he became depressed.

"There must be a catch in it," declared the second man. "Some one'll have to go out and see to it. Where the devil's a boat?"

"There's a boat the other side," said a policeman, heavily.

"Bring her across, what!" cried the officer.

The policeman suddenly lost all joy in the day; but he got the boat. He gave it over to the officers, who clambered in.

Some girls giggled.

The senior of the officers reached out his hand and carefully drew the oil drum towards him. He fell upon the notice and destroyed it, and captured the Sinn Fein flag.

"Empty!" he said, as he cleared the drum from its moorings and they lifted it into the boat.

"It'll be full next time," I couldn't help saying.

Everybody looked at me with one accord as if I had done it. I started to depart, and the good example set the soldiers scrambling into the lorry, the policemen stalking off on their beat, and the crowd drifting on its way.

Such adventures as this might be met with at any street corner.

Himself speaks.

Everywhere there were signs of the times. All day long the military lorries rumbled about the city—great brutal concerns crowded with armed soldiers in tin hats, so that they looked like mouths bristling with teeth. And faster than they rolled the armoured cars like little forts on wheels. And faster still and more furious, lighter lorries choked with Auxiliary police and Black-and-Tans.

At any hour of the day one might walk on top of a raid, though night was the more chosen time for such things. There was generally a small crowd of errand boys, beggars, and telegraph boys, and other people with nothing important on hand, kept at rifle's length by a line of Tommies drawn across the streets; and a hundred yards beyond was the fatal house with lorries like empty mouths before it—the teeth having got out and gone inside. These raids had a fascination for the passer-by, although, nine cases out of ten, nothing was to be seen, and the tenth time there was a chance of being shot, as some one would try and escape, or something would happen inside the house.

There would be days of special military activity, when the bridges over the canals were held up, and motorists had their cars searched for arms and documents, and drivers their carts. At nights, when dark fell and the cold crept through the city, there came occasional cracking shots, which were more frequent as the weeks went on.

Every morning a flaring poster of the *Freeman's Journal*, the most violent organ of the National Press, shouted out some fresh Government atrocity. Yes, signs of the times everywhere, and most eloquent where least was said, as in the public places where never a word of politics was spoken.

But for a day the humblest person could get out of it all. On Howth Head he could wander in solitude. Up Killiney Hill he could climb and feast his eyes on peace.

One afternoon, in the lounge of the Shelbourne Hotel, we were introduced to our acquaintance of the wonderful waistcoats and socks. His clothes were still as perfectly put on ; but he seemed less at his ease than usual. Whenever some one came in, he pivoted round, turning the whole of his body in the movement, and every now and then he beat his forehead with a beautiful silk handkerchief.

“ Oh, I’m rocky to-day, very rocky,” he declared, swallowing the last of the whiskey. “ It’s a terrible place for a man to find himself in. I was in uniform the other day, on the step out there, trying to get inside. Suddenly a dear old lady trotted up to me and grasped me by the hand. ‘ Let me thank you,’ she said, ‘ thank you in the name of all the loyal women of Ireland, for coming over here to defend us from those murderous Sinn Feiners.’ ‘ Yes, madam, that’s all very well, that’s all very nice,’ I answered, trying to get her to let go of my hand ; ‘ but if I don’t get inside there with this uniform on there’ll be a bit of daylight let into me.’ ” He mopped his brow, and exclaimed, “ Oh, my God, my God ! ”

“ Would you sooner deal with the women on the other side ? ” I asked.

“ Oh no ; oh, not at all. Oh, nothing like that about me. I know the other sort, too well I know them. You meet ’em at the top of the landing when you and your merry men dash into a house full of beans. Oh, I know the sort. They’d

bite a man in the tonsils before he had his collar on in the morning."

"D'you raid houses?"

"That's me. That's me in the cold dark night. That's unfortunately me. I'm always getting myself into some trouble or other. As soon as I've done with one stunt I say, Never again. But I get rested; I get full of beans; I grow full of joy. On a fatal day, six months ago, I met a pal. 'What are you doin', old bean?' he said. 'Come to Ireland. Come and chase Shinners. Wonderful people, Shinners. All believe in the soap boycott. It's money for nothing.'

"Money for nothing! I felt full of joy. And here I am up all night and all day, and feeling like death."

"As bad as that?"

"Oh, terrible! Out every night, out all night long, hail and rain and frost. Rushing up stairs, expecting a bullet on every landing. Tearing into terrible slums where men and women and children all sleep in the same bed, and you come away with the itch, and where you have to crawl about with your hand to your nose looking for patriots. And they told me it was money for nothing. And then, in the small hours, you stagger back to bed and find an Irish patriot leaning against the door, and you dodge by with your gun under your coat pointing at him, and he swings about with his gun under his coat, and neither of you has the nerve to shoot the other, Oh, it's money for nothing,

and the life fills a man full of joy ! ” He beat his mouth with his handkerchief, and muttered, “ My God, my God, my God ! ”

“ Poor man,” said my wife.

He pivoted round. “ And the Castle people expect such wonderful things. Last night, oh, last night ! ”

“ What happened last night ? ”

“ Last night they said to me, ‘ Old bean, just paddle down to Irishtown and watch a house there for half an hour. Watch it from ten to ten-thirty, and see if anything happens. We think it’s a meeting-place. Just watch for half an hour. It’s quite simple. Money for nothing ! ’

“ Terrible place, Irishtown. Have you been there ? Then don’t. Home of dock labourers and navvies. I found my house, and in two minutes a patriot who believed in the soap boycott came and breathed in my face. And in five minutes a dear old lady came and looked at me as if she wanted to bite me in the tonsils. I began to feel hot and bothered. It was cold, cold, cold, and there was one lamp, which I seemed to be getting under all the time. In ten minutes I was feeling like death. Then, as the dear old bean at the Castle suggested, something did happen. All the doors in Irishtown opened at the same moment, and people came rushing out. And one man shouted, in a terrible voice, ‘ There he goes, the C.I.D. ! ’

“ The C.I.D. did go. Oh yes, the C.I.D. went. I butted into an old beggar lady, and knocked her

spinning. I rushed down one street and up the next, and bowled over two or three children, and a dear old girl who was trotting out of church full of beans at having saved her soul. I trod on a blind man and his dog, and the dog bit the blind man, and all the other dogs barked, and all the boys whistled, and the married women hitched up their stockings, and the old men and the cripples joined in the chase, shouting, 'There goes the C.I.D.' And if I couldn't have heard 'em, I could have smelt they were after me.

"And then I began to get a stitch, a terrible stitch, and every yard I went it got worse. Money for nothing! Yes! What? I couldn't go another yard, and I pulled out my gun and came about under a lamp and waved it at them.

"It was money for nothing the first time since I came over. They pulled up like a tide coming against a wall—the old girls, and the boys, and the cripples, and the dogs, all treading on one another's toes. And while I waved I tried to get rid of my damned stitch. 'Now you stop where you are,' I said, giving my gun a final shake, 'or you'll find it the worse for you!' And round I went, and started to run again. And all the dogs barked, and all the beggars picked up their crutches, and all the married women hitched their garters, and came after me again. And I didn't know where I'd got, and I charged over a few more blind men, and I got the damned stitch again, and I stopped and shook my gun at 'em, and we all lined up again,

and then we started off once more. And then, when the stitch was killing me, a tram came by, and I made a running jump on to the step, and dug my gun into the conductor's ribs. 'No funny business with the bell,' I said. 'You let her rip.'

"And I waved my gun all round the tram, and everybody tried to get off at once, and two or three dear old ladies spread themselves on the floor, and I said to one, 'Yes, madam, that's very nice, and we'll bring you to at the other end; but we're letting this old tram rip just now.'"

He sank back in his seat, mopping his forehead with his handkerchief, muttering, "Money for nothing!" Then he saw the clock, and beat his mouth with his handkerchief, and cried, "My God, my God, my God! I was due somewhere else half an hour ago." and seized his hat and stick and hurried through the swing doors of the Shelbourne into the street.

We found Dublin more interesting every day.

CHAPTER VII

THE BIRTH OF SINN FEIN

DURING our first months, September, October, and November, Ireland passed into a state of war. The country had been going there step by step, by way of raid and arrest on the one hand, and hedge and ditch shooting on the other ; but the walk turned to a run and the run to a slide when the system of reprisals began. As summer turned into autumn, and autumn wore out, the hate and terror engendered by the deeds of either side were to beget the shameful happenings of the winter, so that Ireland, like a woman frightened during her time, produced a monster when her hour came.

The three months saw the mellow sunshine of an Indian summer exchanged for dreary autumn skies, saw the tender mauves and lavenders of the flowers in Phoenix Park—flowers which for delicacy of hue I have not seen exceeded in any part of the world—decay and change for hardier blooms ; witnessed the soft starlight nights become the early evenings and the discourteous hours when, through the curfew—at this time from twelve to three—wind swept the desolate streets. The months

witnessed the fear, which had been gathering over the land in clouds, come down upon the country in rain.

To what page shall one turn in the book of history, on what paragraph shall one put a finger and say—"Here was the beginning! Here ended Ireland's golden age."

Was it fifty years ago, was it a hundred years ago, was the beginning made when Strongbow and his knights crossed the Irish Sea? Centuries before an English foot had trodden Irish soil, Irish kings had been perishing as soon as the crown was settled on their brows. Then who shall place a finger upon any page? There is no place; there was no clean cut beginning.

Never have the gods been kind enough to Ireland to give her a united national opinion, which might have knit her together; nor has Ireland succeeded in absorbing her successive waves of invaders and making them one people. The Celt with his hoary tradition passes through the mists of long ago, driving westward before him the Firbolg, the inarticulate aboriginal of the country. In turn follow other more masculine peoples, sweeping after the Celt, sweeping to the west and the south the melancholy Celt with his age-long memory.

You must go south and west to find the Celt, and to-day you are not likely to find him pure anywhere. But his mark is in many places. This Celtic blood, when blended with other more masculine bloods, makes a rich mixture.

As a result Ireland has become a house with three tenants who are constantly calling upon the landlord—the first to tell him that he requires no repairs to the house and is willing for it to be left as it is ; the second declaring that the house is in sad disrepair and that something must be done ; the third announcing he will have nothing more to do with such a shameful landlord. Thus the Unionists, the Nationalists, and the Republicans.

The landlord all this while, hearing several opinions and pleading inability to distinguish the right one, does what is easiest and suits him best, and leaves things as they are. It is small excuse that Britain should have been so tardy with justice ; but it is probable that she would have been swifter righting Ireland's wrongs had she heard a united voice in place of many.

The illustration of landlord and tenant suits better than any other ; but it smacks unpleasantly of possessor and possessed. Let us be clear. The landlord of Ireland is that single people made out of the four separate peoples of the British Isles.

Let us turn to a more profitable question. When were the beginnings of Sinn Fein ?

Who shall say so late in the day what might have checked the growth of this movement ? May Sinn Fein have been a distemper which, contracted, must be gone through with ? May it have been something altogether different, a coming to rebirth of a people, as the nearly drowned man is brought back to life with pain and tears ? Is it that the

gods decide such and such a thing shall befall and determine when it shall take place? The Gaelic League went before Sinn Fein like John of old. "After me shall come another mightier than I." It is sufficient that the movement had a beginning, and like an avalanche gained way as it moved.

First, in 1893, the language movement and talk of a Celtic revival. A Dublin professor becomes inspired, and disciples gather about him to master an antique tongue. Dr. Douglas Hyde, in everyday life a pleasant sociable man, is touched with the geist when he pleads for the Gaelic tongue. The movement grows, pen and pencil are snatched up, and the remotest country-side is explored for folklore and fairy tales. There arrives the Celtic illuminator with his paintbrush and his parchment, and the Celtic jeweller, hammering out his brooches old fashioned a thousand years ago. The prophets awaken—the seers of visions, the dreamers of dreams. One dreams of the avatar that is to come, and sees a phantom drummer drumming about the land. A second, reading a telegram of the Russo-Japanese war, receives the intuition that Japan is the masculine pole of the earth and Ireland is the feminine pole, and that some mystic union of the two peoples will bring order into disorder. A third, on Howth Hill, sees bloody giant figures moving across the sky. A fourth, on the top of a tram, sees letters of fire in the heavens.

The national fire burning more brightly and

more steadily. All the while Arthur Griffith's paper, *The United Irishman*, calling to the nation to come together.

Then, about 1906, the birth of Sinn Fein, in those days not a thing of the sword ; but a mild and respectable movement claiming Ireland's right to develop along her own lines to nationhood. Half a dozen years and this movement making little headway, then 1914, Ulster thwarting Home Rule and the Citizen Army getting itself together ; next 1916 and the Easter Week rising. A thousand romantic men strike at Britain in her extremity and rouse her at last.

Was that week which followed the Easter rising the time when a pitiless policy might have brought this movement to an end ? The general who could ably have struck the blow was in Ireland at the time. The movement was not yet a national matter. A thousand men had stood together in what they believed was a splendid burst of chivalry ; but the nation was still impatient of them, thought them a little ridiculous. A hammer was at hand to be used. Had the blow fallen, would this live thing called Sinn Fein have been killed outright ?

The hammer did not fall ; it gave a tap or two. Sixteen men were executed, and numerous restrictions followed ; restrictions which did not affect considerably the law-abiding citizen, but were intended to fetter the growth of a distinctively national spirit. Once again Britain was loth to cripple, discovering a quality for which her enemies

refuse her credit ; but for which she may receive credit some day when national bitternesses have gone out of fashion. She tapped here, she tapped there ; and she succeeded in rousing to a renewed courage that live thing, Sinn Fein.

Two years of repression, and the Irish Republican Party coming to life again like the Phoenix under the flag of Sinn Fein. Here a policeman shot, there a house burned. The British Government replying with a new repressive measure. Other houses levelled, and in answer sterner repressive measures ; other policemen murdered, and still sterner repressive measures. So the descent into war.

It is understandable that the youth of Ireland, represented by the Irish Republican Army and the Cumann na mBan, should throw in their lot with a movement which had a gentle beginning as a Celtic revival. First of all the great European war had passed most of Ireland by ; and the spirit of combat and sacrifice, which had bred giants on the Continent, must have trailed the fringe of its garments into all corners of the British Isles. There was the great Capital and Labour unrest, which must have rippled across the Irish Sea in course of time. The Irish peasant boy, with his plough and his pigs as a horizon, with America as an ultimate limit of vision, was in a state to welcome any change in the procession of his days ; and along comes the patriot with his splendid story.

The unprejudiced person admits that the British Government passed by first challenges and

insults, and in the beginning the task of Irish Volunteer was more exhilarating than onerous. It presented itself to the gaping ploughboy as a great adventure at little cost. Here was opportunity to defy authority, to expand into something more eloquent than a cowherd. So a beginning was made.

But in time the duties of a volunteer spelt more than an inspiring game. They called ever and anon for a man's whole courage. But there was come a new thing to take the place of the bait of splendour which had sufficed in the beginning. The flame of a national being had burst alight. The prize of sacrifice for an ideal was now offered to the dazzled feeder of swine.

This burst of nationalism, which had been lighted and fanned quite falsely by the first enthusiasts, penetrated from the cities to the villages; and the laggard to join the I.R.A. became inspired by example. Thus the army swelled its ranks, thus the national spirit was fanned as if by a bellows. And a third agent went to work in intimidation. The village lout who hesitated to enlist found it the worse for him. That youths joined the I.R.A. in haste to repent at leisure is borne out by orders issued by Republican authorities concerning deserters. But every wide movement of necessity gathers a certain scum, and there is no denying this national awakening was to turn many a village clown into a staunch soldier of the Irish Republic.

A fact to be examined at this point is the surprising absence of people of breeding in the ranks of Sinn Fein. The rank and file of the movement was drawn from the working classes, while the leaders for the most part belonged to the lower middle classes. It would seem as if the Sinn Fein movement was a peculiar national expression of the world-wide conflict between servant and master. Europe as a whole, the world indeed, was in the throes of the Capital *versus* Labour question, and the Sinn Fein movement was Ireland's personal expression of the revolt of the humble person against authority.

There was, of course, a sprinkling of gentry in the movement.

The Dublin universities illustrated how opinion and class went together. The students of Trinity as a rule are gentlemen of birth, and as a body they were loyal to the Crown; the students of the National University, who are drawn from the middle classes, to a man declared for Sinn Fein.

I have tried to be free of prejudice as I tramped the Dublin streets, yet I say out of my heart if one met a prosperous person, a spruce person, such person, nine times out of ten, proved a loyalist.

After a month in Ireland I could pick out the Irish Volunteer. He wore a dirty velour hat, a shabby raincoat, and generally had his hands in his pockets. There was a youthful, cheeky type, belonging to the National University, and there was a dirtier, rather more prepossessing type, drawn

from the errand boy and working classes. There was a better type still, which came from the country.

One had only to notice the Republican Volunteer rubbing shoulders in the street with the British officer, to comprehend these people belonged to two poles, which could never meet. Barriers of class, education, and standards were between them—it was Capital and Labour over again. The British officer, from his stupendous height, regarded the Sinn Feiner through the big end of the telescope, classed all connected with Sinn Fein as “Shinners” and valued them as such.

The Irish struggle did not develop along the lines of an ordinary war. It was not the late European war on a smaller scale. It was the case of an immensely powerful man fighting the shadow of a man.

The Republican Army had no uniform, or more correctly found it impolitic to wear uniform, and the volunteers were on and off active service as a man puts on and off a coat according to the change in weather. Your butcher, your baker, the man who cleaned your boots might be an Irish Volunteer, and when orders came, and opportunity, might make an end of you. A *franc-tireur* I understand this type of soldier to be; but in reality the I.R.A. had many of the strengths and weaknesses of a numerous and hastily built up secret service.

The British Government had to contend with another difficulty—it could not make a straight

ahead attack, it could not level every house in a row. The Government had the power to do this ; but not the opportunity. They were fighting only the shadow of a man. In every row half the houses might be friendly ones, and who could say which were which ? For it was only in the winter of 1920-21 that the nation became welded, and that one could count on most people in the street being followers of Sinn Fein.

On the one point of uniform the British Government was able to stigmatise the Irish Volunteers as murderers, and this stand it took up, applying the phrase "murder gang" to them. The Irish Volunteers had to pay the penalty of being termed murderers, of being hanged as murderers when caught red-handed instead of getting the treatment of prisoners of war ; but more than balancing these disadvantages was the boon of becoming this shadowy foe, which could not be brought to bay.

Unless the country was flooded with troops and artillery—and such a plan had many difficulties in the peculiar circumstances—the affair was likely to be long drawn out. A long-drawn-out campaign was all to the advantage of Sinn Fein. In the first place the world must gradually come to notice the Irish resistance, and the "murder gang" cry of the British Government would hardly ring true if operations were drawn out to the length of a war. Again, time was to the advantage of Sinn Fein in recruiting its strength. As, month after month, raid and arrest went on, and the cities and country

places were patrolled by troops not of the country, and wrongs and injustices followed one upon another—wrong houses were raided, wrong arrests were made—friend after friend, neutral after neutral became foe. The impartial observer could see the nation laid on an anvil as it were and welded into a blade of defence.

The shoot-and-run murders continued in the country places, from the country murder found its way into the cities; and the phantom enemy continued to move round and about but would not come into the open. I heard an exasperated soldier cry out, "Let us give them ten days to get uniform and then declare war properly. Let us treat every man taken in uniform as a prisoner of war, and let us shoot out of hand every armed man caught out of uniform. Their war, as they call it, will be over in a week."

There was truth in this. As a fighting machine the I.R.A. was outnumbered and so ill equipped that had pitched battles taken place, it would not have existed on the seventh day. Consequently the disadvantages of no uniform were far outweighed by the advantages.

I have no doubt the Republican leaders weighed up things and decided on the course of action they considered most profitable, and though for propaganda purposes an outcry was made when a volunteer, caught red-handed, was hanged, yet I believe the Irish leaders saw the logic of this, and looked upon the event as one of the misfortunes

of war. I have always found the leaders to take a more professional view of things and to be less emotional than the follower on the skirts of the movement.

As matters went from bad to worse the British Government proceeded to wage the war in the only way that was possible. In the beginning, increasing difficulties had been met by arming the established police, and by drafting more troops into the country. The police of the cities took to carrying revolvers on duty; but these very arms were to prove a source of danger. One gun or ten guns were equally useless to a man standing up all day as a target. What use are arms to a man when any person in a crowd may step up to him and shoot him? The man who shoots first lives longest in this type of struggle.

The I.R.A. was, on the whole, systematic in its plan of aggression. It dealt with its avowed enemies and did not meddle with those who left it alone. It regarded such people as the Dublin Metropolitan Police as passive rather than active enemies, until the constables came on duty armed.

The police perceived their new danger and presently petitioned the authorities to relieve them of their arms, which petition was granted.

The city police did not show up in a courageous light; but undoubtedly their position was a difficult one. A certain sympathy for their own countrymen may have been at work; but in the main the negative attitude they adopted came from

an appreciation of the British Government's inability to protect them.

The situation during the winter of 1920-21 was a striking illustration of the manner in which a small organised body can intimidate a far larger disorganised body. The fear created in the country by this struggle below the surface was incredible; the boldest seemed numbed. A man might have been murdered in broad day in the Dublin streets, and not a policeman have lifted a finger. The uniformed men on point duty would have gone on waving the traffic this way and that.

The attitude of the police was reasonable. While they stayed neutral they were safe; as soon as they interfered they became marked men. And once they were marked men they stood up in the streets as a target until somebody stepped out of the crowd and shot them dead.

A similar spell had fallen upon the civilian population. Most people desired nothing better than to be let go about their business in peace. They might have loyalist sympathies, they might have Sinn Fein sympathies; they kept their sympathies to themselves and such friends as they were sure of.

And nobody was sure of anybody.

Thus it was the British Government could get no support in Ireland.

The following illustrates the condition of affairs.

A stone flew through a Dublin shop window, and

the shopkeeper came running out and demanded what the stone thrower meant. The man retorted he had thrown the stone because he felt like it, that he was a Sinn Feiner, and he defied the shopkeeper to touch him. He demanded for his services a cigarette, which he was given. A policeman on point duty was close by, a crowd was looking on, and nobody moved in the matter. The shopkeeper returned to his shop. The stone thrower was unlikely to have been an Irish Volunteer, probably he was a hooligan; but the announcement was sufficient to place everybody under a spell.

As matters went from bad to worse the British Government found it necessary to supplement the troops in the country, and an auxiliary body of police was recruited to reinforce the country police, who were dotted about in isolated barracks. The recruits, many of whom were Irishmen and ex-service men, wore black uniforms and tan bandoliers and so earned the name of Black-and-Tans. They were armed with rifles, they rode in lorries, and they swept about the roads at breakneck speed.

In addition to the Black-and-Tans, the Government recruited a second auxiliary police force, which came to be known as the Auxiliary Cadets. The recruits were all ex-officers and wore a most dashing uniform, which culminated in a Balmoral bonnet perched at a jaunty angle. These people were also armed with rifles, and rode in lorries. They were more in evidence in the cities than the Black-and-Tans.

These reinforcements were to assist the search for active members of the I.R.A. and to raid suspected houses for arms and documents. But before you can arrest your man it is necessary to know his whereabouts and if he be guilty or not. This work could not be undertaken by such military and police forces as were in commission, and the British Government met the situation by extending the operations of the secret service. The Sinn Fein organisation was one gigantic secret service, and only another secret service could cope with it.

This strange situation of an immensely powerful man fighting the shadow of a man continued. Justice was ready with the prison and the hangman ; but there was no murderer for the scaffold. But the secret service was bringing in all the time little bits of information—that Paddy Murphy was responsible for this, that Denny Burke had done that. It was useless to arrest Paddy or Denny as there was no concrete proof, for no witness would come forward because of intimidation or out of sympathy, and until the courts martial sat, should a man be brought to trial, no civil jury would convict for like reasons.

The police were scattered through the countryside in isolated barracks. In course of time these barracks were roughly fortified with barbed wire and sandbags. In the undisturbed districts as often as not the police found themselves cut off from social amenities through the villagers regarding them with suspicion and fearing to hold communi-

cation with them lest they fell under suspicion of being sympathisers and informers. The police waited month after month, never venturing far from barracks, in a state of siege by an invisible enemy.

In the disturbed areas the life of the Crown forces was unbearable. Not a man, woman, or child but had been taught to look on them with contempt and hatred. They found themselves picked off as opportunity availed, and they were powerless to say whose hand had pulled the trigger, though probably every villager knew, and knew the road the gunman had taken.

They were out in all weathers patrolling the roads and scouring the country for the phantom army, which never materialised, though it left frequent marks of its presence in trenches dug at the turn of roads, in trees felled across the path, and in walls torn down for an obstruction. Indeed, at any hour, at any favourable spot, it might materialise, round a sudden corner, over the shoulder of a hill, from some wooded height above the road. A volley of shots would pour down, and the gunmen would make away across country, of which they knew every inch of ground. The nerves of the police must have been stretched to the breaking point during those patrols, so that hate was breeding in them like maggots in meat.

The recognised policy of the I.R.A. was to harass the Government forces continuously; orders were issued to that effect, and in cases of

isolated barracks it was the practice to fire occasional shots at the windows night after night with the idea of keeping the inmates on the qui vive for an attack, which was never to take place. Occasionally, if sufficient volunteers were in the neighbourhood, a barracks would be attacked, the attackers bringing with them the materials for setting the place on fire, and so forcing the garrison to capitulate. When it is borne in mind that the attackers frequently arrived in force, it is strange they met so seldom with success ; but the hit and run policy must have been on the whole demoralising to the volunteers. I do not think, when their number and equipment are taken into account, any other policy could have been adopted, nor do I wish to suggest that the volunteers had a lesser share of courage than other men. They are part of the British nation, and many fine soldiers have come from Ireland. But when a soldier goes to battle in the belief that in nine chances out of ten he will come away without a scratch, in fact that all he will be asked to do will be to fire one or two shots and then away, he gets that sense of safety before all which is likely to be fatal to his daring.

The phantom enemy continued to fail to materialise ; but little by little Government agents, swimming up and down in the sea of Sinn Fein, found out who were the responsible Republican leaders in their districts, captured documents gave further evidence, and the police came to know in time whether the butcher standing politely

behind his counter was always a butcher ; whether the baker gave up kneading bread on occasion and produced a gun from under the floor, and so on. They came to know whether the grocer held meetings at the back of his shop after the shutters were up.

Then one day some constable—in most cases a marked man who had been shifted from another part of the country—strolling through the village to buy a stick of tobacco, would get fired on by half a dozen men round a corner. The chances were the assassins belonged to another district, as it was a policy to send volunteers to work in a district where they were not known. The men who fired the shots were gone when the police arrived to their murdered comrade ; but the butcher, the baker, and the grocer were behind their counters like worthy tradesmen. These very men, guiltless of this crime, had possibly done similar work in another neighbourhood ; it was known they were members of the detested phantom army. The police, filled with hate, fear, and worn out with weeks of vigil, turned upon these people and their shops for their just revenge.

Up went the town.

These were the circumstances which brought about the reprisals.

CHAPTER VIII

AUTUMN WEARS OUT

SEPTEMBER wore out ; October wore out ; November arrived. The long, unkind evenings of those months seemed a forcing ground for the terror, which was going about like a disease that one person after another catches. The private citizen, who asked only for peace, seemed to pass to and fro looking neither to right nor left, as if he feared above anything else to stir the curiosity of some partisan of the British Government or of Sinn Fein.

Some evening walks I took through the chilly streets, seeing the lights and the shining mud, hearing the clamour of the paper boys shouting of other policemen shot, of other homes gone up in flames, have fixed those days for ever in my mind.

And still the shaking, groaning lorries, crammed with troops, rumbled round the corners, and still the lighter flying police cars fled up one street and down another. In alleyway and shadowy doorway stood waiting figures to be seen by him with eyes—pickets posted to give the alarm to the meeting not far away ; and in the bars and the coffee-

houses the man with eyes saw the messages passed, and might occasionally hear passwords exchanged.

My French barber says one day, as his razor wanders round my Adam's apple, "I go. Zees country is no good to me."

"What's up?" I ask, speaking like a ventriloquist.

"I go out zees morning. I go by Merriion Square, and a young man come up to me and look into my face, and he say, 'Life is sweet.' 'It ees,' I sez, and turn round and come back home. He have mistook me for some one else. I take no more reesks. I stay here with ze door locked until I can sell ze beesness."

An acquaintance of mine is rung up on the telephone. "Who's there?" he asks.

"Irish Republican Army Headquarters speaking. You have been observed going about with Captain Jones. This acquaintance must cease."

"Captain Jones is——"

"The conversation is closed."

Captain Jones wonders why he has lost a friend.

Some one else receives with his breakfast egg the following warning. "You are ordered by the Republican Authorities to leave the country within thirty-six hours. If this order is not complied with, you will be suitably dealt with. By Order.—I.R.A."

But threat and intimidation were not the privilege of one faction. The following reminder was received by a number of the members of Dail

Eireann, the Republican Parliament, which met when it could in secret session—

“ An eye for an eye,
A tooth for a tooth,
Therefore a life for a life.”

The worthy burghers of Drogheda were startled one morning by the following poster—

“ Drogheda, Beware !

“ If in the vicinity a policeman is shot, five of the leading Sinn Feiners will be shot. It is not coercion. It is an eye for an eye. We are not ‘ drink maddened savages ’ as we have been described in the Dublin rags. We are not out for loot. We are inoffensive to women. We are as humane as other Christians, but we have restrained ourselves too long. Are we to lie down while our comrades are shot by the cornerboys and ragga-muffins of Ireland ? We say, ‘ never,’ and all the inquiries in the world will not stop our desire of revenge. Stop the shooting of the police, or we will lay low every house that smells Sinn Fein, and remember Balbriggan.

“ (*By Order*) BLACK-AND-TANS.”

These shorter days of sharper winds I would cut across Stephen’s Green to the top of Grafton Street, finding the gardens a more desolate place than on the brilliant August morning I had strolled in them first. One’s travels seldom took one into the arms of the Sinn Fein leaders, who were “ on the run,” and moved about as opportunity allowed, sleeping nightly in different houses ; but one did meet prominent women now and then, for the

British Government, fatherly and sentimental in this to the end, continued to leave women severely alone, except in one or two exceptional cases.

Round about the Green one would come upon the tall black figure of Madam Gonne MacBride, looking like a cypress tree, or get a glimpse of what one believed to be the Countess Markievicz, muffled up in mediæval fashion. In the distance, with firm tread and firmer aspect, a dispatch case always in her hand, would appear Mrs. Sheehy Skeffington; round a corner, at her tireless trot, Mrs. Desmond FitzGerald in her green dress; occasionally the charming figure of Mrs. Despard, the Lord Lieutenant's sister, slowly pacing with her stick, like a fairy godmother in a Christmas story.

Once in a blue moon one did come upon some badly wanted man. Three times, during the most violent spasm of the struggle, I passed the most wanted man in Ireland. In each case he had an escort of eleven.

One of these escorts I met coming up Grafton Street, and two moving parallel with Stephen's Green. The men walked in pairs, their hands in their pockets on their guns and their bombs. In the crowd each pair kept a few yards apart, when the streets were empty they increased the distance, to lose the appearance of a military formation. But the man who knew what to look for could still pick them up. How was it these escorts could move about unchallenged in the face of troops, and police, and spies?

In the first place, most of the Sinn Fein leaders were not known by sight to the Government agents. This, more than any other reason, gave them immunity during those final two years. Secondly, these men, with their armed escort, only appeared abroad on rare occasions, for a few minutes, perhaps, when they left one meeting-place to reach another. The ordinary Dublin Metropolitan policeman, who might recognise them, was of no more consideration than a lamp-post. If necessary, he would have waved the traffic back while they marched across the road.

There was more danger from some Government agent, swimming up and down in the crowd like a predatory fish; but a solitary man could not arrest twelve men, and he could do no more than shadow them to their destination, and then was the difficulty of getting back to Dublin Castle with the news. The telephone exchanges were full of Sinn Fein spies who would give warning.

In the course of their travels these escorts would be passed by constant flying lorries, choked with Auxiliary police. A Government man, theoretically, could call upon these people for assistance; but he himself was much more likely to meet his end than the men he was shadowing. The Auxiliaries always travelled at breakneck speed, sweeping round corners like a train. The slower the pace, the better the target they made for ambushers. The only way our man could have halted them would be by walking into the middle of the road and

holding up a hand. The Auxiliaries would not have pulled up ; but, with one accord, believing he was about to hurl a bomb, they would have arisen and shot him to bits.

The Sinn Fein escort would have gone on its way rejoicing.

Occasionally, these wanted men went about without escorts, trusting in fate. In such cases they would be unarmed, for occasionally pedestrians were searched for arms. There were always rumours that in this street or that street some well-known man had been seen cycling along, perhaps Michael Collins (Minister of Finance), Richard Mulcahy (Chief of Staff), or Charles Burgess (Minister of Defence), the three most wanted men in the land—men whom fate and a Celtic renaissance had placed astride a bicycle and set higher than a king.

Time and again military and police united in their efforts to get hold of the Republican leaders ; but generally without result. Extraordinary precautions were taken for their safety. If a meeting was to be held in a certain house, the streets would be picketed for a great distance round by peaceful citizens leaning smoking against doorposts, and other worthy townspeople propped up against lamp-posts, spitting. Not a fly could have got through the final cordon without the agreed-on signs and passwords. 47 told me once it was necessary to produce a tram ticket of a certain value, dated the previous day, and folded in a

certain fashion. It was said on occasions street musicians were posted with orders to play certain tunes in certain events. Many of these stories were true, some legendary, no doubt. 47 was an instructor who taught me well, and tramping Dublin streets, I saw much that was not given to ordinary passers to see, and was told much that must not be repeated.

In the midst of this strange time, while the new movement was aiming to push Ireland into the van of progressive nations, there occurred one of those mediæval happenings which only take place to-day in Ireland, of all parts of the British Isles.

The statues of Templemore began to bleed.

The story goes that on a Friday evening statues of the Blessed Virgin, the Crucifixion, the Blessed Virgin with the child Jesus, and St. Joseph with the Holy Child, belonging to a newsagent at Templemore, began to ooze blood from heart and mouth. At the same time the statues in a nephew's house also started to ooze blood, and the nephew, a young man of nineteen, had a vision of the Blessed Virgin. The Blessed Virgin ordered the young man to make a depression in the floor of his room, and immediately after there was a miraculous flow of water.

At once cures were effected, the first being that of a little girl in the last stages of consumption, who was carried into the house and restored to perfect health. The elders of the town gathered about the statues and offered loud prayers, giving

their thanks to God that the town had been saved from the rage of the Black-and-Tans on the previous Monday night, and that none of the innocent citizens had been destroyed.

The local clergy, as a whole, were chary of expressing their opinions; but in spite of their silence a great pilgrimage began from all parts of Ireland, travelling to Templemore on horse, on foot, on bicycle, in gig, in dray, in dogcart, in jaunting car, bringing the sick in body and the sick in soul. There was an amazing scene in the yard at the back of the house, where the statues were placed upon a table covered with a white cloth. Townspeople and countrypeople, grandmothers, and their grandchildren, husbands, wives, knelt in a crowd about the table, murmuring their prayers, and touching the statues with beads and prayer-books.

This miraculous bleeding, which caused Ireland momentarily to hold her breath, as if supernatural intervention was coming, became a nine days' wonder, and then was no more. This week it was: next week it was not. Perhaps it could not survive the arrival of the *Daily Sketch* reporter with his gimlet eye, his notebook, and his camera.

Once or twice I passed 47 in the street, but he took no notice of me, and I let him go in case he had business on hand. He would not come to see us, as the acquaintance might be unhealthy, and we did not like to look him up without an invitation.

Finally, I dropped him a line telling him to

meet me in the Botanical Gardens if he were free. I wandered down to the water in the hollow, and there he was coming across the little bridge. A yard or two off he waved a hand in salute ; we joined up and strolled down a sheltered walk. He took a cigarette from me, and started to smoke without saying a word.

“ How do you like life ? ” I said.

“ It’s interesting,” he admitted. Looking up, he added grimly, “ Are you finding your way about ? ”

I agreed Dublin was interesting.

“ What have you seen ? ” he said.

“ Plenty of your chaps about. At least everybody says they’re in your line. Every man serving the Government seems to be called a Black-and-Tan, but now and then some more exact person than the rest hisses into your ear, ‘ Those men are secret service.’ ”

47 said quietly, “ Those fellows you see aren’t the old secret service. They’ve been got together to meet this emergency.”

He proceeded to wind up. He was not a talkative fellow ; but he could be communicative when he liked. I have no doubt I was the only audience he had had for many a day.

“ A secret service isn’t built up in a day. An agent should be chosen after long, long observation. After courage—more important than courage, really—your man should possess the power of holding his tongue.

“ Our service has always been limited, and it

was a good deal chopped up in the war. Then we were faced with this business. We had to be reinforced holus bolus. The men had to be trustworthy, and the authorities decided to enrol ex-army officers. I dare say this was as good a choice as any other. But it has its drawbacks. We work in all strata of society, and we should belong to all classes of society. The military man is limited. He is likely to be loyal and courageous ; but his caste prejudices are his ruin. He calls his enemies Shinnners, and smiles at their efforts."

47 stopped, looked round suddenly and said, "Have you seen our mutual friend since you came over ?"

"Not once," I told him.

"I have passed him a couple of times. A fellow I know told me he bewitches them at the Castle of an evening with his piano. Well, he told me once that when he was working in Germany during the war, before putting a foot over the frontier he turned over what he would be, and he decided to be a farmer. Accordingly, hour after hour, he practised a farmer's slouch. He sat down and invented his farm. Hour after hour he lived in imagination on that place, until he saw it so clearly that he could walk over every inch of it, discuss every foot of it, and he said he had only to close his eyes to see it all again—the chestnut mare with the wall eye, the duck with rheumatics. He tried to sell the place to me."

"Did you buy ?"

“He knew his job ; but what is happening now is pathetic. These ready-made sleuths, who are the best-dressed men in Dublin, have been arriving in batches. Men with eyeglasses appear suddenly to sell bootblackening. Men in spats turn up to explain they hold an agency in condensed milk. These people fill the lounges of the best hotels, drink together, and talk confidently together.”

“And,” said I, breaking in, “the barmaids ogling them explore their inmost souls, and the waiters bearing them cocktails pass on to Sinn Fein headquarters the pearls that drop from their lips.”

He smiled. “Not as bad as that. I don’t suppose they give much away apart from themselves ; but wherever there is a decent lounge they can be found gobbling like turkeys in a farmyard—turkeys that have not heard of a Christmas dinner. I have seen one of those peaceful commercial travellers drop an automatic pistol in the lounge of the Shelbourne Hotel, and I slunk into the lift in horror. I have seen a commercial traveller in spats leaning over a bar talking to a dimpled barmaid, while a gentleman at his elbow, in a shabby black velour hat and a dirty trench coat, took down his particulars. Even my ‘cousin,’ who has many of the best qualities of an agent, the keenness, the tirelessness, and so on, is attacked with this autumn madness, and any of these evenings if you care to hang outside his house, you will see a Government car rattle and bang up to the door, you will see half a dozen sleuths file up into his house, and

presently they will come down again with him. These merry gentlemen get into the car and rattle away on some raiding expedition. And, of course, in the shadows on the other pavement, is a gentleman in a black velour hat and a dirty trench coat."

"Do you think some of them are going to be done in soon?"

47 shrugged his shoulders. "Most of these chaps are doomed by the Castle people to a double life. By day they pass as peaceable citizens. At night they disappear into the Castle, rig themselves out in military clothes, and turn out again to raid and arrest. By Gad! they work for their living all right! There's a legend that Sinn Fein agents watch the Castle gates all day to get descriptions of all who go regularly in and out. There are spies inside the Castle too, and officials in high places in whom the Sinn Fein rot has set as a fungus attacks a tree."

"You're fed up," I said.

"A bit. I'm a bit fed up. It's a nervy game. We're getting in a lot of stuff; but we're up against a pretty big thing. Half the nation are ready to help the Sinn Fein intelligence. The joke is the women one meets never cease singing the praises of their own intelligence people, and in the same breath they damn us for spies."

"What's the opposite show like?"

"They're not better than us—I don't think they're as good; but they have the pull of working in their own country and having the backing of

three parts of the nation. They all look the same ; but most of our fellows are another caste."

" You'd think your chaps would get no information. People would know them and tell them nothing."

" It's not easy to get hold of good stuff ; but man suffers from the inability to keep his secrets. People with a little bit of news burst to tell it, and sometimes the least thing is worth a lot. It may be the link that was wanted to complete the chain."

47 broke a leafless twig off a bush and began bending it in his fingers.

" Agent 1 reports that at 10.25 he found a dead man at such and such a spot, and a hatless man with a smoking gun running away. Agent 2 reports at 10.30, five minutes away from Agent 1, he saw a hatless man, panting hard, jump on a tram going to the station. Like Agent 1, who found the body, he was not able to get a description of him.

" Agent 3 reports that as he left the station by the 10.50 train, a hatless man jumped into his compartment. He was able to get a full description of this man, which was, etc., etc. The man got out at such and such a station.

" In a certain room in Dublin Castle a man sits putting together the reports, which come in helter-skelter. He finds these three make up an interesting story. Records are looked up, the description tallies with a certain man, in whom Dublin Castle has been mildly interested for some time. Inquiries

are made where the gentleman in question left the train ; the gentleman in question is secured, and he finds himself asked a number of questions that—but there's no need to go on with the story."

47 shrugged his shoulders. " What's the time ? " he said next, and looked at his watch.

" You're not going yet," I said. " I haven't seen you for a month. The tram fare here and back is sixpence. I want my money's worth. What's your wife doing nowadays ? Tell her we sent all sorts of good wishes."

47 frowned. " It's a lonely life for a woman," he said, " and a nervy one, too. Of course, one always is meeting new people, always going from door to door ; but in his heart a man is as lonely as a desert islander. Never a word spoken in favour of his beliefs. Never, never, never ! "

A fish moved in the running water which was the boundary of this side of the gardens. It brought 47 out of the brown study into which he was falling.

" They're trout," I said. " I saw them earlier in the year, when the sun was about. We'll come and give your wife a look up."

" Not yet," he answered. " I expect it would be all right ; but wait a bit."

" Don't be too long, or we'll come along in spite of you. Do you mean you are shadowed ? "

" Not as far as I know. Did you ever hear our mutual friend's receipt for getting rid of a follower ? "

“No.”

“When you look behind and find what you suspected is a fact, and the man in the dirty velour hat and shabby raincoat is still hanging a hundred yards behind, saunter to a shop window. In a minute your friend will follow suit a few doors down. Directly he has chosen his window, you find you have seen all you want in your window, and you go along and look in at his window. There you both stay. But sooner or later somebody has to move, and you make sure that he does. Directly he moves off you follow him. By the time he has gone down two streets and found you at his heels he wonders what has happened. At the end of another two streets he makes a bolt for a passing tram. He won't come on any more expeditions with you.”

“That sounds simple.”

“It wouldn't do you much good if you stayed all the time in the same place. You'd soon get picked up by somebody else. I'm off.”

“I wanted to hear how you think things are going.”

“I've not made up my own mind yet. I'll tell you next time.”

Without any more fuss he started to walk away down the path, and I let him go. It was some weeks before we saw him again.

CHAPTER IX

THE HUNGER STRIKE

I TOOK the tram back to College Green, and found the paper boys raising a great clamour there. The first of the Cork hunger strikers had died. As I left the tram and threaded through the crowd towards Grafton Street, I felt that, like myself, all these people I was rubbing shoulders with were fearful this was an augury of more terrible events.

For more than two months the incredible fast of fifty Irishmen had been capturing the public imagination, and, according to the Nationalist Press, the imagination of half the world. Interest in the fasting men had lasted through eight weeks of fierce events—violent deed followed daily by violent reprisal.

On August 12th, Terence MacSwiney, who had succeeded to the office of Lord Mayor of Cork on the assassination of Lord Mayor MacCurtain, was arrested, and with other prisoners to the number of fifty-one, went on hunger strike.

This represented a definite battle—it had a beginning, it had an end—between the British

Government and Sinn Fein ; and as the Cabinet acted with a consistency it had seldom shown before and was not often to show after, Sinn Fein suffered a defeat. There had been many previous hunger strikes ; and the authorities had invariably given way at the eleventh hour.

It is curious to look over Dublin newspapers of that date and see the black headlines, which announced, morning after morning, the straits of the Irish " martyrs." Back come those gloomy weeks when days were shortening and cold and damp were returning to the land again.

I find what seems to be one of the first entries. " Lord Mayor, Terence MacSwiney, arrested Thursday night in the City Hall. The (Republican) Arbitration Courts were sitting, and about fifteen persons were arrested with the Lord Mayor."

At his trial the Lord Mayor, as chief magistrate of the city, declared illegal a court martial which sat to try him in Cork, and those taking part in it were liable to arrest under the laws of the Irish Republic.

He was charged with (a) having a police cypher under his control ; (b) having in his possession a document likely to cause disaffection ; (c) having made a seditious speech on the occasion of his election as successor to the late Lord Mayor MacCurtain.

" A perfectly innocent man ! " as Mrs. Slaney had declared.

Throughout his trial the Lord Mayor behaved

with dignity, and at the end said, "I wish to state that I will put a limit to any term of imprisonment you may impose. I have taken no food since Thursday, therefore I shall be free in a month. I shall be free, dead or alive, within a month."

But the Lord Mayor was to be alive two months after that.

The National Press began a campaign for the release of the hunger strikers. Before the fast was many days old the following headlines had appeared :—

"Lord Mayor unable to speak. Signs of the end. Deathbed message." "Sinking very rapidly." In smaller type, "Cork captives dying." "Just fading away. Deathbed scenes."

But to the embarrassment of the Press, which as usual lacked restraint, the strikers delayed dying, and week after week passed, until all fasting records were broken. Little by little the fury of the Press abated, and presently the "martyrs" were shifted from the leading columns to less important places.

A cloud gathered over the affair. Then threats were tried. The Medical Officer at Cork Prison received the following letter :—

"As your professional attendance upon the eleven hunger strikers in Cork Jail gives a tinge of legality to the slow murder being perpetrated upon them, you are hereby ordered to leave the jail at once, and the country within twenty-four hours of this date—3 p.m. 6th Sept. '20.

“ Failure to comply with this order will incur drastic punishment.

“ O.C. No. 1 Brigade, I.R.A.”

With the majority of the nation the strikers remained national heroes, “ martyr ” was the word most commonly used in connection with them ; but as the fast became more and more incredible, a section of the public began to experience doubt. All sorts of rumours were afloat—that the Lord Mayor could not return to Cork owing to the rage of his friends—that the Catholic Church was troubled and divided whether this decision to starve should be considered as suicide or not. In the meantime prayers were offered for the strikers in thousands of homes, and tears stole down thousands of cheeks at thought of the men suffering for Ireland.

“ One of God’s miracles ! ” frequently declared Mrs. Slaney, as the fast passed from fifty days to sixty days, and went on towards seventy. And this belief in Divine intervention was common to many hearts.

What would happen if the Lord Mayor died ? It was hinted there would be some terrible reply from the Irish Volunteers.

Now, when the strikers were becoming legendary, one of them had died, and crisis had returned like a thunderbolt.

“ Monstrous ! ” Mrs. Slaney exclaimed, meeting me at the top of the stairs. “ Monstrous ! So at

last they have murdered that splendid young Irishman ! They'll murder the others before they have finished their bloody work ! ”

The British Government murdered two others, or two others decided to murder themselves, according to one's politics, and it looked as though the British Government had the strength of mind to murder the lot ; but before this could be done Sinn Fein gave up the battle, and Arthur Griffith, the acting President, called off the strikers. Victory went to the British Government, and there were no more hunger strikes.

Did these men, who had suffered a long illness and a painful death, die for nothing ? No. In spite of doubts as to the strictness of the fast, the sacrifice made by them helped in the hardening process the nation was undergoing.

It had been intended to bring the dead Lord Mayor to Dublin ; but this was forbidden, and the coffin was taken by ship to Cork. Sinn Fein replied by ordering a day of mourning, and presented Dublin with the shadow of a funeral, flowers taking the place of the coffin in the hearse. Citizens were ordered to close their shops, and those whom sentiment for the Lord Mayor did not persuade to renounce a day's trade, put up their shutters upon warnings that they would be wise to show visible marks of respect.

I went down to O'Connell Bridge to see this funeral without a corpse. The day had turned into a Sunday, and the streets were filled with the

proletariat. The Mass, which I had listened to at the pro-cathedral, had been a stupendous experience. Every inch of the stone pavement of the great church had been covered with kneeling humanity crying out dolorous Latin cries to the chanting of the priests, and fingering countless rosaries. The flood of feeling flowed this way and that like waves heaving in a sea. I did not know whether to marvel at this spectacle or to sneer at it. Were we in this mourning church wrapped in a flame of sorrow, which was going to weld the nation into a metal out of which an everlasting sword could be forged : or more truly were a few tricksters playing on the easily wrought feelings of a not quite adult nation, which, childlike, weeps as easily as it laughs ? Labour and Capital over again ! Look right, look left—who here was not drawn from the working or shop assistant classes ? As I heard these people calling out the sounding Latin phrases, I shook my head.

The press upon O'Connell Bridge was tremendous, and presently the hearse came round a corner. It was filled with flowers. After it rolled a Dublin funeral, only there went by a greater line of shabby carriages than even Dublin usually gets together. One looked and looked, and still more horses came round the distant corner.

In the following of this funeral marched Irish Volunteers and Cumann na mBan. They left no impression on me other than being dusty and riding on the top of a wave of emotion, which

might set them down as quickly as it had lifted them up. Again it was Labour *versus* Capital, the servant against the master. These people were the same as the kneeling congregation, and the majority of them were growing up.

But this demonstration was a manifestation of that resolution which was affecting the nation as new blood poured into the veins of an anæmic man. Whether the exaltation was enduring enough to carry the nation to a renaissance, to a splendid rebirth, or whether it was sufficient and no more to take this people through a struggle with Britain, was a matter for a prophet. A temporary state or a lasting state, its existence could not be denied.

One of these nights a man started signalling from a house which looked upon the back of our own. We watched him from our beds. He had a lamp, and lived in a top story. The signalling continued at intervals over a period of several weeks, and what came of it all I do not know ; but it made these nights more mysterious watching this lonely man and his lamp high up in the attic.

Then, one evening, Mrs. Slaney started to act in a peculiar manner. About ten o'clock she began fluttering up and down the stairs, and when I suggested locking the front door as usual, she said she would do it. A quarter of an hour later I caught her fluttering on the stairs, and this time she was unable to contain herself. She took me into the half dark of one of the landings.

“ I am putting up a friend for a night or two,”

she said, avoiding my glance. "He's a Sinn Feiner, and he doesn't want to go home. I'm giving him the little spare room at the top of the house. He has to come after dark, as he doesn't want it known where he is. I don't want a word said to anybody."

"Is he on the run?" I asked brutally.

"Well, not exactly that; but he has a little work on hand, and he doesn't want to be disturbed. He thought it was safer to come round here in case they should think of raiding his flat during the next day or two. Ah!"

A gentle knock had come to the front door. Mrs. Slaney fluttered down to the hall, where, as usual, no light was burning.

She managed successfully to manœuvre our mysterious caller into the upper reaches of the house; I heard no more of them, and nobody seemed to have noticed his incoming or his outgoing next morning. But the following night Mrs. Slaney, who made the journey to the hall shorter by drifting into our rooms early in the evening, began to fidget as soon as the clock had turned ten. The gentle knock came at last, and she bustled down to the hall.

Somebody had to make the visitor's bed, and on the morrow Mrs. O'Grady, on her knees on a piece of newspaper raking out our fire, sniffed, and said, "Terrible times!"

"What's up, Mrs. O'Grady?" we inquired.

"Ah," said Mrs. O'Grady, sniffing again, "the

woman upstairs is always up to something or other. She's always after keeping in with somebody."

"Who's it now?"

"God forgive her for having a man like that in the house these times. Risking us all! There's my man downstairs, he says the Black-and-Tans have only got to know there's some one here, and they'll come and take every man in the house off to the Castle, and perhaps burn the house down."

"If that's the case, Mrs. O'Grady, these do indeed be terrible times."

"That woman doesn't know how to treat decent people when she do get them in the house," went on Mrs. O'Grady, passing over my wit. "Now, what right has she got to have a man like that with you here? Now you're what I call class. I said to himself downstairs, I said those new people that have taken the drawing-room flat, they're class. They're the nicest lady and gentleman we've ever had here. They're class."

We changed the conversation.

But I was in some part to solve the mystery that evening, for this time Mrs. Slaney had arranged to leave the hall door on the latch. Our visitor must have come in unheard and gone upstairs. Mrs. Slaney, strangely enough, was spending the evening in our rooms, and had brought down, as far as I remember, a tray with coffee things on. When she proposed retiring, I carried this up for her, and going ahead into the sitting-room, found there, in a corner by the fire as if he had been

warming his hands at it, and still with his overcoat on, the mysterious visitor. He looked round like an animal caught in a trap, and then he said good night in answer to my good night. I was only a moment putting the tray down and going.

I tell this story because this man's advent was to be my downfall later on. I did not then know who he was ; but his identity leaked out in time.

He bore the most picturesque name in Ireland—Darrel Figgis—and he wore the most romantic beard. He looked like some mediæval personage stepped out of a picture. He was a novelist, a poet, a dramatic critic, and other things. Not very long before he had been nearly hanged at a drumhead court-martial held by some irresponsible, and it was whispered among the philistines that he went about the country afterwards selling pieces of the true rope. He was not one of the recognised Sinn Fein leaders ; but he had been fairly prominent in the cause, doing propaganda work, and he had been imprisoned. There was only one such beard as his in Dublin—his own—and it was said he refused to part with it, even when he went on the run, although by so doing he added materially to the chances of capture.

He visited us three or four nights, and then departed as unostentatiously as he came.

So every day brought its new event, and the weeks stalked by in grim procession.

Early in November, the execution of Kevin Barry caused another of those demonstrations,

which revealed the national temper. On the bleak morning a vast crowd gathered in the yard of Mountjoy Prison and recited the Rosary, standing and kneeling together some time before the execution, and continuing in prayer until the hour of execution was passed, when they quietly withdrew.

Since his capture in the skirmish outside the King Street bakery, Kevin Barry, who was a medical student, eighteen years old, had joined the number of national heroes. He was young, he was a soldier of the Republic, it was repeated everywhere that he had been tortured by the British military authorities, and in spite of his treatment he had refused to speak. The nation set itself with a will to the making of this new hero.

"Splendid!" declared Mrs. Slaney, returning from her baby club. "You should have been there this afternoon to hear those mites singing of Kevin Barry. We all helped to teach them, and they picked up music and words at once. Where, but in Ireland, would you find such quick children?"

Poor little devils! Taught their prejudices before they know what they are doing. As soon as they can stand put into the strait-jacket of a narrow national patriotism—that thing which has had its uses, but now should be out of date.

There is every reason to suppose that Kevin Barry met his death as a soldier would wish to meet it; but that is no reason why one should not look sternly at the facts of the case. The scrimmage outside the bakery was not a glorious affair. The

Irish Volunteers, guns in their pockets, posed as civilians until the chosen moment, and Kevin Barry alone did not make good his escape. A woman said, in my hearing, "Was there ever a country like Ireland for the number of patriots and martyrs? Look at Kevin Barry—a boy of eighteen!"

What of the two British soldiers who were killed in that skirmish, one of whom was said to be sixteen? Did they not give their lives for their country as surely as did Kevin Barry? What of the men who have perished in every corner of the Empire for generations back? Their numbers must be as the sands of the seashore. But some peoples use words more easily than others, and those who work for the inarticulate must expect their epitaph short and sharp.

Before the anguish of that tragedy was over there came a new shout from the Nationalist Press: "Expectant Mother Shot Dead."

A countrywoman was killed at her cottage door by a stray bullet fired from a lorry passing along the road. "Expectant Mother Shot Dead!" The headlines struck one like a blow in the face.

And all this while increasing ruin and arrest. Tales of girls' hair cut off because they talked to the police. Tales of the police stripping men, beating them, and sending them home naked. Tales of men tied to chairs and thrown into the river. Tales of men who waited in ambush hour after hour for their quarry to come round the curve

with an insatiable lust of hate. Tales of ferocious reprisals when homes were looted and the inhabitants driven into the fields to couch with fox and hare. Who dare give the story in detail : one would never be done. Deed of terror replied to by deed of terror, and never an attempt by the partisans of one side or other to reach the truth, and give that exact truth to the world, and tell that exact truth to themselves.

Three furious November weeks passed away.

CHAPTER X

BLOODY SUNDAY

SUNDAY, November 21st, Himself and I went to Howth, and spent all day by the sea on that wild bit of foreland, which Dublin City has not managed to tame. It was getting dusk as we came back on the tram. The ride is long, and it was too late in the year for the tops of trams. We were soon shivering and wanting to be back home. Then something happened to make us forget the wind, As we came among the houses the reflection of a great fire caught our eyes. It was on the far side of the water, a strong, clear blaze, as if a ship were on fire.

"We must get along and see it," said Himself. "What the deuce is it?"

"Government supplies, I bet. The Auxiliaries got bored and went to sleep, and the Sinn Feiners came along." But I was not joking in my heart. I was feeling uneasy.

We did not go to the fire when the tram stopped at Nelson's Pillar. It was too late and too cold. We climbed down into the middle of an ugly-looking crowd. A lorry passed quite close to us.

“Hallo!” Himself exclaimed, “there’s a dead man!”

We stared after the lorry. The booted feet of a dead man poked out of one end. The crowd stirred unpleasantly. What had happened? More lorries, full of armed men, were following the first one. An armoured car rolled by. They all passed over O’Connell Bridge and fled down the quays towards the Castle. From the Castle another stream of lorries passed towards the fire.

A newsboy came quite close calling out something, and we got a paper. There, in great lines across the page, we read, “British Officers Murdered In Bed.” We went home astounded.

The flat seemed unusually still. Mrs. Slaney heard us and came down the stairs before we had shut the door. She looked a little shaken.

“Have you heard the news? Dreadful! Horrible! But I have no doubt they deserved it.”

“You can’t approve of this?”

“No, I don’t approve of it. I don’t approve of shooting at all; but you must remember how the Irish people are goaded.”

Without warning there was the sound of firing outside. We crowded to the window in time to see an armoured car rolling by at the end of the road, and people flying in all directions. A Lewis gun on top of the car was firing shots into the air at intervals.

“That’s blank cartridge,” Himself said. “It’s to clear the streets.”

“There !” Mrs. Slaney exclaimed. “Why do they terrify innocent people like that ? No wonder the people of Ireland are bitter. Ireland is the most crimeless country in the world when she is left alone.”

Mrs. O’Grady came in with our teapot.

“You’ll feel the better, mum, iv a cup of tea,” she declared. “It do be dreadful, and all those beautiful young men.”

“I can’t understand why we didn’t hear the shooting this morning,” I said. “It must have been all round.”

“I’ll leave you to your tea,” said Mrs. Slaney, who wanted to stay. “You won’t be going out to-night. Perhaps you’ll come up and see me.”

“I’ll probably go and see what the fire is,” Himself answered. He turned to me. “It’ll do you good to get out.”

Mrs. Slaney retreated, and Mrs. O’Grady nodded her head. “It’d be a charity to leave her alone. She’s that frightened it would do her good.” Then she went out.

“Well ?”

“What a haul,” Himself exclaimed.

“How about poor 47 ?” I cried.

“He must be all right. His name’s not in the paper. We must look him up.”

“Look his poor wife up.” And then I said, “Let’s have tea and get out for a bit. I hate the feeling of this house.”

“We’d better get back before it’s late. It’s

sure to be a disturbed night. I expect they'll make curfew earlier after this."

As soon as I got into the street I felt better. The moving people gave me confidence, although all through the city there was a feeling of fear such as I cannot describe. Rumours of the Croke Park affair, where a dozen people had been shot by the police at a football match, were being whispered abroad ; but nobody seemed to know much. We remembered the dead man in the lorry.

The fire was burning out. We saw it now and then through the openings of the streets ; but we never got as far as it. It had long been dark, and I soon found the night was getting colder and colder. Presently I began to think a fire at home would be less dismal than this tramping about in the dark. After half an hour everybody seemed to have gone indoors, and there was danger of being curfewed if a sudden change was made in the time.

We went back.

When we were indoors again shooting began all through the city. Patrols were probably firing more blank cartridge to clear the streets. Down the roads tramped soldiers in tin hats, and armoured cars rolled by. We put out the light and leaned from the window watching. Now and then some passing officer, fearful of a bomb, would shout, " Keep your heads in."

In the middle of it all Mrs. Slaney bustled into the room, giving us no time to answer her knock.

" I have just been talking to a leading Sinn

Feiner," she announced, "and those men who were shot this morning were all spies. I told you that our boys must have had something definite against them."

"I don't think it makes it a bit better," I declared. "A life is a life, and it's frightful to sneak into a man's bedroom while he's asleep, and kill him in front of his wife."

"It's disgusting," exclaimed Mrs. Slaney, "to think that English officers and gentlemen will descend to such things. Monstrous! Before the war such a thing was never heard of."

"I think it a pity the Sinn Feiners murdered them." I stuck to my guns stoutly.

Mrs. Slaney borrowed the paper and departed.

"Her Sinn Feiners are all spies too," I said, as soon as she had gone. "What's she talking about?"

Himself nodded. "In any case I take off my hat to spies, Sinn Feiners or British. They have to be brave men. I should think a spy wants all the qualities of a soldier, and many more besides."

That was all I got out of him. We went to bed soon after, but not to sleep, at least I did not. Desultory shooting and bombing went on all night.

After "Bloody Sunday" as it came to be called, the world drew a horrified breath over the men who were shot in bed. "Poor So-and-so shot asleep. Frightful!" What of his wife who was not shot, but who lost her reason three days after, and three weeks after lost her life and her baby's life; his

wife, who for the rest of her brief life saw men filing into the room, heard the sound of shooting, heard the raiders laugh, saw them wash their hands after the killing ?

What of the other wife who cried out to her husband and tried to help him escape through the window, and saw his broken body on the window-sill ?

What of the wife, coming from her bath, who was confronted with five men with revolvers ? Pausing outside the bedroom door where her husband was sleeping, she faced them, appearing not to notice their revolvers. "Do you want my husband ?" she asked, smiling. "He has just gone out, but do come in and wait." Her face was untroubled. "Or perhaps you can leave a message," she said. "I always take my husband's messages, you can trust me."

The man mumbled something, and the party filed away.

What of the wife who was held by two men while her husband was shot in front of her ? When the raiders had left she found her husband still alive. She rushed into the street, looking wildly for a doctor, praying no doubt as she ran. She found a man and ran up to him.

"My husband has just been shot," she gasped, "but he is alive. Will you get a doctor, quick !"

"Alive ! My God, I'll finish him !" He went up the steps pulling out his gun.

The Sinn Fein women fought and suffered for

their men equally well, lied for them, fetched and carried for them. The men had the limelight; but with few exceptions the women were unknown, and were content to be unknown. There was no reward for their services. I wonder how far a national movement would go if there was no public recognition for any one. A man unable to read about himself and his hunted companions would cut a sorry figure. A man hanged for his cause would go far less steadily to the scaffold without the support of the newspapers and the crowd. But I fancy a woman would acquit herself in all circumstances because her greatest instinct is service.

CHAPTER XI

AFTERMATH

THE officers met their ends in their beds, in their baths, at shaving. One and all were shot in cold blood, and, extraordinary to relate, no defence seems to have been made. In every case the victim was taken unawares. This veritable Slaughter of the Innocents could only have occurred to such a race as the British. These officers, on a par with their behaviour in the hotels, went to bed in an enemy country with unlocked doors and locked-up guns. That supreme British contempt for the enemy—at once the making and the undoing of Britain—limited the imagination of these people to such an extent that though they were engaged upon what is allowed to be most dangerous work, they could not conceive calamity falling upon themselves.

Some time afterwards I spoke to a Dutchman, and he held up his hands and cried, "Here am I who would not go into a strange house without making inquiries and locking my door; and these men come into an enemy country and go openly

about their work ; and at night lock up their guns and go to sleep with the door open. Ach ! ”

The Sunday death roll in no way represents the magnitude of the plan. There were several escapes—people were not at home, wives tricked the raiders ; but more far-reaching than these things was the fact that there seems to have been a serious miscarriage in the Sinn Fein plans. One story goes to relate that a list of eighty victims was prepared, and a number of Irish Volunteers gathered on Baggot Street Bridge, or one of those bridges over the canal, waiting for guides who did not turn up.

The men detailed to carry out the work of assassination took no more risk than was essential to the undertaking. In every case they called in overwhelming numbers on their victims.

The task was not glorious ; but when one examines the circumstances, what other means had Sinn Fein of getting rid of such dangerous enemies ? Man for man, an agent of the secret service should greatly exceed the value of a soldier. His power lies in his secrecy.

The penalty of secrecy has always been death. An agent knows this, and is reconciled to the law. It is just enough. But the men who carried out the work of assassination wore no uniform, they too worked under a civilian cloak. The pot came to destroy the kettle.

It was now towards the end of November, and getting dusk soon after the middle of the afternoon.

There were long damp depressing evenings and interminable nights. That extraordinary terror, which had been coming in puffs, was at last sweeping through Ireland like a wind.

It is curious what one recalls looking back over a troubled time. It is an atmosphere rather than events. There come back to me those early darkening afternoons when people passed sullenly with bent heads, and the paper-boys raced through the mire, bearing their printed aprons which told of fresh ruin. I remember meeting on successive days three carts fallen over on their sides because a wheel had run away.

I do not remember in any other city, great or small, this kind of accident, and I asked myself were these errant wheels, which had run away because somebody had forgotten to screw them up, a sign, a portent that Ireland was not quite an adult nation?

On one of these evening walks, in Dawson Street I think it was, I saw a horse that had jumped into an area, and was standing down there unhurt, eating hay and oats, unable to be got out. For a minute or two I joined the crowd, which was gaping through the railings at this accident. But while we all gaped we were gloomy and suspicious of one another.

For with greater fury than before, the Crossley tenders, choked with police, raced up and down the streets; searching, searching, searching for those butchers, those bakers, those candlestick makers

who laid aside their aprons now and then when the hour was propitious and grasped a pistol in their hands ; those candlestick makers, those bakers, those butchers who never seemed to leave their counters and untie their aprons from their middles. By day, by night ; in storm, in calm, the flying wheels splashed through the mire. Knock, knock, knock. " Open ! The military ! " Knock, knock knock. " In the King's name ! " Up rattle windows. Out poke heads. " Open, open, or we break in the door."

The butcher's wife, the baker's mother, the candlestick maker's aunt open the door as slowly as they dare, and the stream of police sweep in like a tide—down into the cellar, out into the garden, up into the attic, through the skylight, everywhere in an instant that the hunted man may not escape ; peering into grates for ashes of burned papers, pulling out mantleselves for hidden arms, examining picture frames for secret documents ; and when all is done clattering down from attic and up from basement, pouring down the steps and climbing into the tender, and then at breakneck speed to the next house on the list. Bang, bang, bang ! " Open ! The military ! "

In the week that followed the murders of the officers, the British Government made the supreme effort of this tremendous police hunt—operations in Ireland never assumed the proportions of a war—and in three or four days the prisons were filled. The British Government was altering its tactics,

and finding a solution for dealing with this will-o'-the-wisp enemy by arresting all suspects, in preparation for lodging them in one or other of the internment camps under construction. In Dublin the arrests of that week numbered hundreds, and among the prisoners was Arthur Griffith, the father of Sinn Fein.

The funeral of the officers passed along the Liffey, and all the world and his wife went down to the quays to see. Shops were shut, sometimes after a little persuasion by mourning Black-and-Tans, and the streets were left empty. The crowd was reverent; and cases of lack of feeling were rectified by Black-and-Tans posted in lorries at points of vantage. Hats that did not come off as the gun carriages went by were helped off, and three young men who were disrespectful were thrown into the Liffey.

A Mr. Goodbody, of Cork, who was jammed against me, said to a friend, "Michael Collins himself is in the crowd. He do be a profitable man to look at. Indade, and he would have made a good king in a sporty country. But he is headstrong, headstrong."

Said an old woman, striking me in the stomach with her elbow, to a friend, "Och, 'tis a beautiful sight this, and sure it's a pity they had to kill those beautiful young men."

"Indade," said the friend, poking me over the appendix, "it's our boys I would like to see dressed out like this. Give me the military, I sez, and not

they Black-and-Tans. It will be a grey day for Ireland whan she sees the last iv the military."

"Sure," said the first dame, "it is our boys will be all in green then, and that'll be a grander sight for ye."

"Och!" exclaimed a second friend, making use of my toes to see better, "the Black-and-Tans came to us the other day, and I was sitting over the fire. 'Who's there?' I sez at the bang on the door. 'Open, the military!' sez they. 'I will not,' I sez. 'We'll have to break in,' sez they. 'Break away,' I sez, 'I don't have to pay for it,' I sez. 'It's the landlord as does,' I sez."

The funeral passed, the crowd dissolved; for some reason I wandered about the streets without going home. In course of time I was surprised to find it had got dark. I came across College Green, sauntered up Grafton Street, which was crowded. The mud was shining as usual, and the paper boys were shouting some catastrophe. I had come to the corner of Wicklow Street when a man turned quickly into it from Grafton Street. He was in the shadow, but I knew him anywhere. I overtook him in a stride or two.

"Good night," I said.

"I saw you," 47 answered, "but I was in a hurry. Come my way a little." He slowed up.

The street was dark and nearly empty.

"They didn't get you?"

"We saw no sign of them."

"How's your wife taking it?"

"She's right enough. She's been a bit jumpy because we've no arms. I'm off to the Central Hotel now to see my 'cousin.' Most of our lot have been called into the Central. My wife says she won't stick it any longer unless I have a gun, so I'm off to see about one."

"I don't wonder at her."

He nodded. "The last few days have been pretty worrying."

"You people aren't going into the Central?"

"We're banking on the chance we aren't suspected. If we go into the Central it won't do us any good when we come out."

"I see that."

I think 47 was rattled that evening in spite of his matter-of-fact words. At this time a man had to cope not only with his own fear, but with the national fear that was suffocating everybody, so that each man had to bear more than his own share. There was a touch of bitterness, a touch of philosophy, and more than a touch of pathos in 47's voice as we walked along the gloomy street.

"We chaps last just as long as we are undiscovered. Discovery may take place to-day, to-morrow. A man may make a slip; but if he makes a slip he probably knows what he has done. But somebody else may have made the slip. He may leave his Sinn Fein friends in smiles; he may go back to cold faces. This state of things plays the devil with the nerves.

"A soldier, after the battle, lies down among

his companions, safe, secure, knowing no harm can come ; but an agent is never safe, never secure. This minute, next minute the ground may have opened under his feet, his secret may be out, and he standing alone against a nation. The curtain may hold an assassin, the street corner may conceal the bullet. While he eats the foe may be drawing near ; while he sleeps they may be coming. Shall he take this road ? Shall he take that ?

“After some time in the service he becomes like a beast of the field. Danger comes on the breeze, in the rustle of the grass, in the shadows of the trees. While he eats he listens. While he sleeps he plans.”

I interrupted him. “I’ve got to get home now. Tell your wife we’ll be along to see her to-night.”

“She’d like it,” he admitted.

“We’ll be there quite soon.”

“I don’t think it will matter. We haven’t been shadowed as far as I know.”

“So long,” I said, pulling up.

“So long,” he said, going on.

I turned round and went back to Grafton Street.

CHAPTER XII

VISIT TO A TOP STORY

As soon as Himself and I had had dinner, we went to look up 47's wife. There was no time to waste if we were to get back before curfew. I was longing to see her after all this time.

They lived in a top story. A dilapidated servant opened the door, and gave us a peculiar, sidelong look. She did not know us, but she stood aside and made no effort to show the way up.

The house seemed grubby in the dim light of the hall. The windows showed the city's dust and fog; in the better light the curtains would have revealed the dirty hands of maids who had tended the fires and then pulled the curtains across the windows. How well I knew it all! And then the house grew more and more dilapidated as we mounted. There was an ancient meat safe at the foot of the last lot of stairs with a cat asleep on top of it.

The final flight of stairs was bare, and we made the steps creak as we went up.

Her ears were ever atune to footsteps, and the sound of ours brought her out on the landing.

"You!" There was relief in her voice.

"Hallo! All well? My dear, you look seedy."

She laughed, but her laughter did not ring true.

"It was nice of you to come." She shut the door behind us.

"You are seedy," I said, looking at her carefully.

"I'm all right," she answered. "This is funk; pure, unadulterated funk has brought me to this. I'm behaving in a beastly manner, really. The only thing I haven't done is run away. Some day I'm afraid I will."

"But your husband's all right?"

"For how long? To-day? To-morrow? There's not a door that will lock. You know Irish doors. He's out now. I made him go and get a gun. I said if he didn't I wouldn't stay another day. One man against a dozen hasn't much chance; but an armed man can do more than a man with nothing."

Himself nodded.

"It's terrible—terrible," 47's wife went on. "There is no one to talk to about the risks. My husband won't talk. He thinks it's bad for me. But it's driving everything in, it's strangling me. I can't sleep. I'm always afraid. Sometimes I hear noises and footsteps, I am afraid of the noises; sometimes there is silence, I am afraid of the silence. People come to see me. I laugh and talk, and try to show I am listening, and really every sound outside is more important to me. Even up

here I can hear the front door bell ring. I haven't felt so bad this afternoon because I'm alone, and if they called it wouldn't matter."

"You're safe in this house for a time, anyway," Himself declared. "Sinn Fein isn't going to repeat the dose just yet. Every one is lying pretty low. No one wants to come into the limelight."

"I realise all that in the day; but at night it's so different."

"Night's really the safe time," said Himself. "I should think it's not much of a job trying to get about during curfew."

She laughed shakily. "My husband has said all that before. I know I'm a coward; but I shall be better if we have the gun. I'm thinking, thinking what we'll do if they come—all night long I'm thinking. We've only one heavy stick, which I hang on the end of the bed. I've planned it out. When they knock at the door, my husband will open it, and as the first man comes in I will throw the water jug at him, and my husband will hit his wrist with the stick. He may drop his gun, and we can get hold of it. My husband says assassins bore him, and won't talk about it, and so I have to keep my feelings to myself, and they are going in—in all the time."

"Talk to us now," I said.

"I'll put on the kettle," she answered, getting up. "It won't take long boiling. What's that?"

I had heard nothing. She leaned out of the window.

“ Well ? ”

“ There’s a car,” she said slowly. “ It looks like a Government car. There are five or six men.”

I looked out. “ I know that front man,” I cried. “ He lives near us. We met him at the Shelbourne once.” I beckoned to Himself to look.

“ I know him,” she admitted. “ What does he want ? He would never be sent here with a message. We told him to keep away.”

The men descended from the car and came into the house.

“ He’ll bring in every Sinn Feiner in Dublin at his heels,” I suggested.

“ My dear, he’s not important enough, though he thinks so himself.”

In a minute there was the sound of single footsteps coming up the stairs.

“ He’s alone, anyway.”

The next moment the man of the beautiful waistcoats and socks came into the room. He was subtly changed. His hair was less sleek, his clothes were not so well brushed, and the silk handkerchief, which he used to beat his brow and mouth, had got crumpled.

“ Oh, my God ! ” he exclaimed, as he appeared. “ What a lot of stairs ! ” He saw us, hesitated, and said to 47’s wife, “ How’s our friend ? ”

“ He’s all right,” she answered coldly.

“ Good ! Went up to the Castle on Sunday. Saw them there safe—by Gad ! so safe. Lots of fellows, well fed fellows, happy, cheery fellows.

They had a long list of names, all the brotherhood, and they were ticking off the chaps who were killed. 'How's 47?' I asked. 'All right,' said one chap, after a glance at the list; 'at least, we've had no word through about him.' 'My God!' I said, 'I must get along and see for myself.' "

"Who are your five friends?"

"An armed guard. You couldn't expect me to go about without an armed guard. Every Shinner in Dublin is at my heels."

"My dear fellow, didn't it strike you that by bringing an armed guard clattering into the hall you would be likely to turn the Sinn Fein attention to us?"

Our friend laid a soothing hand on 47's wife.

"Have you been out much since the affair?" she asked abruptly.

"Every day and every night. No peace. Nothing like that about me. But it doesn't matter, for I can't sleep. My God! and I was told this was money for nothing! Money for nothing, and the life filled a man full of joy!"

"You've got nerves."

"Nerves! By Gad, nerves! Hear her." He pivoted round towards us, showed he had recognised us, and smiling, said, "How are you?" He came across and laid a hand on my shoulder. He was the type of man who touches women. Then he jerked round again to 47's wife.

"Pitchforked in, I was. Never knew a thing. Didn't know enough to keep my mouth shut, or to

change my clothes when I went down the slums. Looked on all men as brothers. Thought they loved me as I loved them. I haven't slept for months. Let me talk. Let me get it off my chest. I'm all for peace, I am. I always have been, and somehow I always seem to get flung into some beastly mess. Some one said, 'Come and chase Shinnery, old bean.' And here I am, but the beastly Shinner's always chasing me. Every time I go out some one follows me, sometimes a man, sometimes a woman. The life's killing me. Watkins—you know old Watkins—he and I got digs together at last, and took it in turn to keep watch while the other slept. I got wind up in case he dropped off. I didn't dare go to bed without my guns in case some one came in, and I always had the feeling that I'd shoot Watkins by mistake some night, or get the old woman in the stomach when she came in with the hot water in the morning."

"Hush, old man," said 47's wife.

"Hush! That's it. Hush! If I don't talk, I'll go mad! None of the fellows at the Central will talk. We're all in the Central Hotel now. They hang in corners brooding on their sorrows. They don't care about mine. The chaps at the Castle don't talk. They don't know what it is to be out and alone."

"It's what you're here for."

"Splendid! What I'm here for!" our friend exclaimed. "I'll be killed next! Mark my words.

No ; don't let's talk of death. It makes me feel all hot and bothered."

"Hush," said she, again.

He put a hand on her arm. "I must be on the move. I'll tell the fellows at the Castle 47 is all right." He came across and patted my shoulder, and waved to Himself. And then he clattered down the stairs to his escort in the hall. A minute later we heard the engine throb and the lorry drove away.

The kettle was boiling, and we drew our chairs up to the fire.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM THE HOUSETOP

TEA was over when 47 came in. He was out of breath from climbing up the stairs ; but he seemed satisfied with life and pleased to see us.

“ So you got here ? ” he said.

My wife made room for him beside her. “ Come over and get warm,” his wife said. When he came across she said eagerly, “ What luck ? ”

His answer was to put a hand into a pocket and pull out an automatic pistol.

“ That’s better,” she exclaimed, almost happily. “ Now I’ll stop worrying. Have you plenty of bullets ? ”

“ Enough,” he answered. “ I hope you’ve got something left over there. I’m devilish hungry. I’ll hide this thing in the mattress for the present.”

He went off, and when he came back he had left his coat and hat behind. He was given the best place by the fire, and was soon busy eating everything that was left.

“ Did you bring any news back ? ” she presently demanded impatiently. “ You never tell me

anything. What did your 'cousin' say? Did you see him?"

"I did. It was dark when I got to the Central. There were any quantity of loafers in the opposite doorways; but I think it was too dark to be recognised. There was a bit of a delay while the sentry unchained the gate. I had to give my 'cousin's' name before he let me in. The hall was full of soldiers. They look after themselves all right there. It was a damned relief to be somewhere safe at last. I haven't felt as well off for months.

"My 'cousin,' who was away at the Castle, came in in a few minutes, and we pushed a way up the crowded stairs, went past the out-of-work sleuths at the bar, and into his bedroom. I told him what I wanted. He produced a number of guns from sundry portmanteaux; but these were not for me. One was as long as his arm. He told me he'd take me to the Castle and get me something.

"He wouldn't do anything until he had had something to eat. We went into the dining-room. Depressed sleuths were at tea. My 'cousin' was the same as usual, making a gesture do for a word.

"'That was a bad show on Sunday,' I said. 'What are all the fellows in here going to do?'

"'They'll stay here a bit until we're re-sorted.'

"'I suppose most of them are known to the opposition show now?'

"He nodded. 'Several of the chaps were getting warning letters before the Sunday show took place. We'll have to shift ourselves about a bit.'

“ ‘ Very busy ? ’

“ ‘ Going all day. We’ve got two or three big fish in the net lately.’

“ Presently we left the depressed sleuths at tea, passed the out-of-work sleuths at the bar, and pushed a way down the stairs, which were full of men going up and down. It was pitch dark outside.

“ The last thing my ‘ cousin ’ did, as we stepped into the dark, was to raise his eyebrows for me to follow. He stalked like a great cat down an alley, which is one of the ways to the Castle. There were sundry loafers in the lane, of course. Two policemen, who touched their hats to us, let us through the gate.

“ It was too dark to see anything. We seemed to be crossing a great yard. We skirted the lower edge of this, and the ghost of a charming chapel moved past us, as foggy land goes past a steamer. We stalked along a line of dreary buildings into a doorway among many other doorways, and up a dirty wooden stairway. There were landings, and doors which had not seen paint for years, and on the door was the word ‘ Intelligence.’ We mounted turn after turn, and came presently to a shabby room with packing cases and odds and ends of ammunition in it, and nothing else. With a lift of his eyebrows and a wave of his hand, my ‘ cousin ’ went off on his toes, and I sat on a packing case cooling my heels. The electric light burned through a smeary globe, there was nothing to look at—odds and ends of uniform, odds and ends of ammunition.

Outside the windows the dark was curling like a fog, and there were occasional shouts from the yard. I waited a full ten minutes, tapping my heels and feeling wonderfully safe.

"I seemed on land, and you"—he nodded to his wife—"out in the city, a waif swimming in a friendless sea. Here were people ready to defend my beliefs. Here were people who upheld my traditions. That profound loneliness, which is the tragedy of an agent's life, for a brief space was no longer mine."

47 had dropped his chin in his hands, and was looking into the fire. He threw up his head.

"My 'cousin' came back. He was standing in the doorway before I heard him. He lifted his eyebrows, and I slid off my packing case, and we passed down the passage into another room with a cheerful fire and people at work. This room was crowded with papers and typewriters, and though the people there sat in glum silence and went on with their work, nevertheless it seemed the best room I had ever been in.

"The fire was burning up, and in a box to the right was a mongrel bitch with a litter of blind pups. They were never still, and tugged at her all the time, rolling over with warmth and pleasure. A man sat on a stool gazing at the coals, and now and then he would put his hand among those rolling things, and the bitch would lick it. I envied that family.

"Another man smoked on the edge of a table,

and a third man, a man who worked so furiously that he never raised his head, was standing with his back to a window, leaning over a high desk overwhelmed with papers. On a sheet he had an endless list of names, down which he was running a finger. With another hand he opened a directory and looked up addresses, and constantly he referred to the stack of papers.

"This great round-up was bringing in a mass of information, and each new bit of news opened up fresh avenues. I soon gathered from this man's exclamations that he was going through the latest batch of information, and arranging fresh raids.

"He mentioned some name or other. 'I am going to get the blighter to-night, I think,' he said. All the while we were there he continued to run his finger up and down the pages and give instructions; and one could visualise the lower end of the Castle yard, and the great gates through which we had come, near which lorries, shaking with armed men, waited to be loosed in torrents down the streets.

"My 'cousin' went to something, which was half a desk and half a table, and opening it with an effort, for there was a great weight of books and papers on top, he pulled out an automatic pistol, somewhat the worse for wear, took it to pieces, put it together again, loaded it, and fumbling among debris at the bottom of the desk, he rescued a spare magazine and a handful of nickel bullets. All these things were presently handed over to me."

His wife interrupted him. "Don't tell me what you have brought back is no good?"

"No; it's tip-top," answered 47, hastily. "It wants a good clean, that's all. I'll fix it up to-morrow. Anyhow, I stuck it into a pocket, and we went back to the Central for my 'cousin's' guns, for he was going to look up his wife in her flat. The one which was as long as his arm he thrust into a tremendous pocket, and a second he kept in another pocket, with his hand on it. So we sallied forth, and I have no doubt on the way passed many a citizen of one persuasion or the other prepared for eventualities like ourselves.

"In Grafton Street our ways parted. My 'cousin' lifted his eyebrows and disappeared."

"Are you still hungry?" his wife asked, as soon as 47 had done speaking. "I'll cook you something presently."

"That'll do me," he answered, nodding his head. "This early curfew is the devil. You people haven't got too much time."

"There's an hour," I retorted, looking at my watch. "It wasn't much of a pilgrimage here. You're pretty snug. Up in the roof isn't as bad as it sounds."

"No place like a top story," 47 said. "No one has any right on your stairs then. And there's usually a skylight; and a man can put up a good show through the skylight. The skylight here is pretty handy. Come and look."

"You're not taking him on the roof?" his wife remonstrated.

"He can put on a coat. We won't be a minute."

"He'll freeze."

"Not me," I said, getting up.

"Stick on something," 47 suggested, getting up too. "It isn't a bad night."

"You're off your heads!" his wife retorted, from her chair by the fire.

We wrapped up, and 47 led the way through the skylight on to the roof. The ascent was tricky, but no worse than that. One had to mount on the banisters and haul oneself through the skylight, and one day the affair would give way, and the escaping sleuth would be precipitated among the advancing assassins. However, this did not happen this time.

"Don't show yourself," 47 ordered, as we shinned up. "People creeping about roofs at night aren't popular in this city."

He bent double and crept behind a chimney stack, and waved me to follow. I glanced through the skylight before I went. One could see down half a flight of stairs. From here a man really could put up a show, as he had said.

We were among the chimneys, like birds in a nest. We were in a forest of chimneys, in a mountainous country of roofs. The house was on a hill, the house was tall; we could see everywhere. The night was sharp, and as a consequence the sky was filled with stars. And below, all over the

place, were the city lights. The roar of life came faintly up from down there, and here we seemed removed and secure, as if this perch were a rock which the sea of terror could not submerge. Yet, now and again, some drops of spray seemed to outleap the waters and dash against our mouths, as, with headlights which tore great holes in the dark, the Crossley tenders, filled with armed men, raced through the streets, and on their heels rolled armoured cars from which poked the Lewis guns I could not see. We followed these grim processions as they fled. Presently it was as if the city had become a pot, and we up here were intoxicated by the rising vapours.

On 47 it acted as a drug. His tongue was loosened, he became prophetic.

"Can you feel it?" he said, cupping his hand as if it held water. "Can you feel it coming up to us? Of course you can. I mean the terror, the rage, the hate. Can't you see through the dark to the police on their way? Can't you see through the houses as if they were glass, to the hunted men? Loyalist and Republican—in all those hearts the same passions—hate, and fortitude, and cruelty, and loyalty to their beliefs, and terror. In this whirlpool of passion can the spiritual endure?"

He peered between the chimneys. His face was a blur; but he began to permeate the atmosphere with the feeling which he left out of his lowered voice.

"Sometimes I think," I put in, "that in the

evolution of man the gods choose certain people to develop by trial certain qualities. Courage, fortitude, idealism—has Ireland been chosen for a year or two as the forcing ground for these ? ”

“ Who knows ? ” he answered vaguely. “ These qualities are being bred here ; and treachery and cruelty and hate.”

“ Don’t you feel the quality of this struggle is spiritual ? Don’t you feel something hard and pointed like a sword blade there, though covered with the rust of every vile passion ? ”

“ If there was nothing of the spirit here, could men be brought to contend so long and so furiously ? ” he answered. “ But what are we to do with these passions, evil as well as good, that we have raised in the name of idealism ? Nothing that has been created can die.” He peered out between the chimneys.

“ Look down there,” I said. “ Fear and hate and a certain exaltation. Of course, in this struggle Sinn Fein has the exhilaration of the small man against the big man. However right the big man may be, he cannot have much zest in an unequal show.”

Then it was that 47 became like a prophet on the rooftops.

“ Truth ! Truth ! Who shall find truth in all this untruth ? One begs and begs for bread, and receives always a stone. Lies, lies, lies ! Who can get at the truth now ? Can it ever be found ? I am tired of stones. Who will give me bread ?

“No man down there wants the truth; no man down there would listen to the truth; one wishes to shout his case louder than the other, that is all. The people lie, the papers lie—it is lies, all lies!”

“And this thing which makes men mad is called patriotism,” I said.

He turned round from gazing at the city. “There you have it. There is one voice speaking the truth. Patriotism, how it limits a man, in judgment, in sincerity, in his horizon.

“Nowadays, can nationalism be other than a rather poor thing? It was useful in the past, but it was only a stepping stone to better things. First individual against individual, then family against family, then tribe warring against tribe, nation striving against nation. Only to-day the inspiration that all nations may be bound together. Has man been deceived? Can nationalism and patriotism after all be false gods?”

I, harking back to his cry of “lies, all lies,” interjected: “Here is the truth spoken by Loyalist and Republican in the golden age before all men were liars:

“‘You started it,’ the Republican says. ‘For generations we asked you for more generous legislation, and you made promises and broke them. Then we took up arms.’

“‘My dear fellow, you have hit the nail on the head. We were continuously unjust,’ the Loyalist answers; ‘but listen to the excuses. Either the

peoples of the British Isles are one nation, or else they are several nations, of which more than one resides in Ireland. We have to listen to so many opinions. You Sinn Feiners want to break right away, the Nationalists want Home Rule, and the Ulster people want things to stay as they are. Naturally, this decision does not help us to do what we are disinclined to do."

" 'The majority want a republic ; the majority should rule,' answers the Republican.

" 'My dear sir, might I suggest the argument is illogical out of your mouth ?' answers the Loyalist. 'If the part, Ulster, must be given to the whole, Ireland, then the part, Ireland, must be given to the whole, the United Kingdom. And only a few who cry "Up the Republic" earnestly and intelligently want that same republic. After the rising of 1916 you had few friends, and the people have only been bludgeoned into desire for a republic by the cries of the leaders, by the presence of British troops, by the repression and the personal injustices attendant on the political situation. This feeling is false, and would quickly pass on a return of normal conditions.'

" 'There is a great deal in what you say,' the Republican admits ; 'but what of the atrocities committed by your people ? How can we forget those ?'

" 'I cannot deny the atrocities,' answers the Unionist ; 'but are you not to blame ? What is your army other than a collection of people who,

while it suits them, masquerade as peaceful citizens ? ’

“ The Republican answers, ‘ Your accuracy and penetration are extraordinary. As a military unit we are corner boys and assassins ; but in the circumstances, how can we be otherwise ? ’

“ ‘ True, very true,’ the Loyalist assures him, ‘ on that last point I see with you eye to eye. Against such odds there is no other method you can adopt, unless you went in for passive resistance and boycotted England on a grand scale ; but, of course, a nation cannot be organised to that type of cold-blooded resistance—it must have the stimulus of war. As things are, if you were to come out into the open, your army would be no more in a week. But if I give you that point you must give me this. The excesses of the military and the police have been caused by the type of war you wage. Our men don’t know friends from enemies, there are no rules of warfare, consequently they take justice into their own hands.’

“ The Republican winks. ‘ The intelligent among us realise this. The outcry we raise is for propaganda.’

“ ‘ Ah ! ’ cries the Loyalist, winking back, ‘ it is the same with us, and our shout of murder gang. We use it to stimulate our followers and justify ourselves. Your leaders know and our leaders know that we are both out to win, and we must use every trick and shift. For, of course, we both have a contempt for the mob, haven’t we ? The mob is

necessary to us, but its opinion is worth nothing. Once the mob enthusiasm is raised, it will swallow any lie, it will shout any slogan.' "

My oration appeared to have sent 47 to sleep. I came to a full stop. When he began, it was on a line of his own.

"An empire, an imperfect instrument, is nearer the co-operative ideal than separate states watching one another. Therefore, when Ireland, a part, demands to break away from the whole, it is an effort towards old tribal days, and I am out of sympathy. And if the whole feel they are endangered, in justice to themselves they are at liberty to deny the demands of the part."

"You grudge Ireland independence? "

He passed over my interruption. "But, of course, a vigorous national life and a noble national ideal are undeniable advantages. Then how reconcile these two things—the liberty of the nation with the safety of all nations? It is the old difficulty of reconciling anarchy with socialism, those poles with equally strong claims." He paused and said, "Yes, there is a way out."

"Dominion status? "

He nodded. "That will allow Ireland internal development, and that will keep her within the Empire, and there will be no breach made in the nations."

"Do you expect that to be the end? "

"I hope so." He switched his mind elsewhere again. "It's in bigger things than Ireland I'm

interested at bottom. It is in world questions—the class wars and that kind of thing.”

“Would you regret working against Communism, if you were ordered to?”

“Not necessarily, for one can sympathise with a thing, and yet find it unworkable, and a menace. In the van of all these movements march men with the seed of truth, who are so far ahead of time that if they leapt, and the world leapt after them, the world would fall into the ditch. It is evolution which alone will bring the masses after these people. And so these prophets must be destroyed that the world may not fall into the ditch. I do not hate what I kill. I have nothing against the body that collapses at my feet. I thrust with the sword of my mind. My victim and myself, may we not both be honest men caught in the toils of life?” 47 moved. “Here, I’m freezing. We must get inside.”

Herself speaking.

I was sorry for 47’s wife as Himself and I left her at the top of the uncarpeted stairs. She looked small and tired, and very much alone, and I have no doubt she felt all those things.

But I must hurry on. That night witnessed our first raid.

It was four in the morning, and bitterly cold. The knock at the door, or rather the crash on the door, was shattering, and brought me straight up in bed.

“Go back.” It was Himself on the landing.

"Don't be frightened. It seems to be the Auxiliaries."

I continued to sit up, shivering. There was the rush of many feet, like the rush of hundreds of sheep after being penned up. The house filled at once.

"Hands up!" somebody shouted. I visualised Himself shivering on the landing with his hands above his head.

"Unarmed. Right. Put 'em down. What's your name?"

Himself gave his name.

"Who's in the house? Who's in that room?"

"My wife."

The door burst open, and armed men raced through into the room beyond. They appeared to look at nothing, but I suppose they took everything in. They had guns strapped up and down their legs and round their bodies, and balmoral bonnets on the backs of their heads. One immense specimen was left to guard me. He stood by the empty fireplace and eyed me. I eyed him back again. Presently he smiled.

"You look cold," I said, for he was shaking under his heavy coat.

"More tired than cold. Been at this without a break for three days and nights. It's——!" He left the rest to me.

A series of heavy thuds overhead made me look up.

"It's all right," he said soothingly. "Only

the chaps searching. The lady upstairs is a bad lot."

"What?"

"I advise you to clear out. She's coming into the limelight soon. Oh, we know all about her."

"She's harmless enough," I said. "She talks rather."

"Some people blow too hard." He pulled off a glove and breathed on his fingers. "What a country! What a country! What brought you here? The Irish are mean enough to pick the flesh off the bones of a flea."

"Curiosity."

"Well, it's curious enough; but it will never be anything more than England's market garden, whether it's a republic or part of the Empire."

"There are some fine men in the movement."

"Fine!" There was contempt in his voice.

"And you an English woman!"

"Not English—Australian," I corrected gently.

"Therefore I may be counted neutral, more or less."

He laughed. "More or less. But which?"

I shook my head.

"All the same," I said, "you do make a mistake in thinking the Sinn Feiners are inferior."

He caught me up, and refused to let me continue.

"Inferior! Of course they're inferior! Look at them skulking round corners; look at them hiding behind women. They can't conduct an ambush in a decent manner. Oh no; they must

wait until the kids are coming out of school, then they chuck their bomb. We can't hit them then. Oh no, they're not a decent race. The German is honourable. The Turk is honourable. The nigger is honourable. But not a Shinner. Stick up for any mongrel race you like, but not the Irish."

His torrent of words left me gasping.

"I've just come up from Cork," he said, after a few moments' pause. "If you want to see the Irish patriot in all his glory, go to Cork."

Himself came into the room. He had managed to seize a coat from somewhere ; but he was shaking with cold.

"I think they're nearly through," he said. "I hear sounds of going."

"We have just been discussing the Irish," I said weakly.

The sound of many feet clattering down the stairs cut my remarks short. My new acquaintance joined the ebbing tide and was gone.

CHAPTER XIV

AN AT HOME

"You were able to come. I'm glad," my hostess exclaimed. "You know every one."

Himself drifted to a far corner, where I lost him.

I made my way across the great warm room towards the fireplace. Tea was progressing merrily, and I was soon seated with a cup in my hand, eating potato cakes hot from the kitchen.

There were about thirty people present—grave professors, elderly people who might have been doctors or lawyers, one or two who looked like decadent poets, and lots of wives. Everybody was talking. This man had been in the post office during the Rebellion, that woman had carried the Sinn Fein flag somewhere else on that occasion. They told racy stories against themselves and against the British Government.

"The other day," a priest next door to me began, "I was in Talbot Street at the time of that shooting. You remember?"

"I remember," said a woman, dropping her cigarette into her saucer. "Yes, do go on."

“ I was in the pork butcher’s shop. As a matter of fact, a bullet nearly got me in there. Quite near enough. I haven’t got the sawdust out of my pants yet, I hugged the floor so close. I went out as soon as it was safe. The D.M.Ps. had gone; you know the way they go. One of the boys was stretched in the middle of the road. There wasn’t much life left in him, not enough to suffer. I knelt down beside him, and the crowd drifted back. A Tommy was standing near, with his hands on his rifle and his tin hat on his head. He wasn’t taking any notice of me. There were other wounded people. All of a sudden an old beggar woman shouldered her way through the crowd to the Tommy. ‘Och,’ sez she, ‘take that tin lid off iv ye while his riverince is saying his prayers.’ ”

Some one leant above me with a jug of cream.

“ Cream ? ” He poured cream into my cup and sat down by my side with the jug in his hand. “ What a life we lead,” he said. “ Have you been raided yet ? ”

“ Yes, not so very long ago.”

“ Did they take anything ? ”

“ Our breakfast, and a copy of Balzac’s ‘ Droll Stories.’ But they were a very decent lot.”

“ You were lucky. They are light-fingered gentlemen as a rule.”

“ I expect some of those stories aren’t true.”

“ Not true ! ” exclaimed another man. “ My dear lady, I know a family near Cork who are

constantly raided by the Black-and-Tans. The same man is always in charge. Just before Christmas he called upon them with a revolver in each hand and said, 'I've called for my Christmas box. Make the cheque a decent one, as I've had a lot of trouble with this house.'

Everybody laughed.

"I know two old ladies," said somebody else, "Unionists by the way. One night at dinner time a party of officers arrived and captured the house. The man in charge told them there was a man on the roof; but he told them not to be disturbed, and to go on with dinner. He came back after a little, apologised, and said he'd made a mistake. They discovered afterwards that he had cleared the house of everything valuable."

"They've got splendid opportunities, of course," said my friend, balancing the cream jug on the end of the sofa. "I don't mind looting so much as man-handling. I can tell you some of the boys get a bad time when they are interrogated."

I swallowed my tea reflectively.

"There are cases of torture that we never hear of," said a new woman, drawing close. "I know of several cases in the country where the boys were caught, rolled in barbed wire, then flung on the ground, and the Black-and-Tans jumped on them!"

"They must have got sore feet," I suggested.

"I know of a policeman in Limerick," the woman went on, "who beats every third woman

he meets. He kicked a crippled child from one side of the road to the other in one kick. And then the English people are surprised that the Irish people hold out. The Irish are the most peace-loving and spiritual people in the world, and they must overcome wrong."

"We know the men who do these things," said the man beside me. "Twenty years will make no difference. We'll get them."

"Well, I'm all for peace," I declared. "But then I'm not Irish."

He laughed. "Do you think we'd have got very far if we hadn't let a little blood?"

"I think it might have taken longer to wake up the Government; but it could have been done. Women got suffrage; no blood was shed. The woman's war was the only clean one waged, I think. Why not be satisfied now with the bloodshed you've had, and try something else?"

"No; the lion's tail must be twisted. It will be twisted before we've finished. Ireland's only a pin point; but she's pushing right into the heart of the Empire."

There was a pause, and a snatch of conversation came from somewhere else.

"I saw Mrs."—I couldn't catch the name—"yesterday," a woman said. "She's working very hard, and, of course, her husband will kill himself one day."

"Who is that?" I asked.

"She's an American; but she always calls the

Irish 'my own dear people.' Her husband is an Englishman ; but he has an Irish soul."

Our hostess advanced.

"Has any one heard of the Minister of Propaganda lately ? I love that man. He's the only man among you with wit. Tell me, somebody, what is going to happen."

There was a general shrugging of shoulders as she settled in a chair.

"The British Government will give in."

"But what of poor Ireland in the meantime ? "

"Things have been quiet for a few days," I ventured.

"An unnatural quiet," said a second priest. "Something is brewing for the Black-and-Tans. How our boys can gull them ! "

People came towards us attracted by our laughter, and an old lady whose name I could not catch, and whom I never saw after that evening, drew into the circle.

"Things are getting worse," said our hostess. "I can't go down the street without danger of being run over by armoured cars, and the soldiers just look as if they are going to stand up in the lorries and fire into the crowd."

"We weren't talking of Curfew," said a pallid youth ; "but let us, because I want to tell you the story of old Meg."

"Old Meg ? Who's old Meg ? " our hostess demanded.

"You must know her. The dirtiest beggar woman in Dublin."

"I know her," a woman exclaimed, "a dreadful old creature. She tore her dress open in front of me the other day in Wicklow Street, and said, 'For the love iv Heaven, lady, buy me some combinations. It's after perishing with cold I am this minute, and you in furs. Look at me poor bare body. It's you have the good heart, lady, and you've never felt the cold.' 'Indeed,' I said indignantly, 'I have. I feel the cold very much. Cover yourself at once, you disgusting old woman. Do you see the policeman looking at you?' 'Him!' she said scornfully, 'I take no notice iv him. It's a son I have in the I.R.A. Give me the price of the combinations, lady, and I'll let you go.' 'I'll do no such thing; but I'll give you a shilling if you promise not to go near the public-house with it.' 'Indade, an' shame on ye, lady, why would a poor old woman like me be going near a public-house?' "

"That's Meg," said the youth. "She's a great character, and her mother and grandmother begged on the streets. She was curfewed outside my house the other night. Must have been the night you gave her the shilling. Drunk? I heard a commotion and leaned out of window, and there she was defying the British Army. But they collared her. 'What're you doing out now?' asked a Black-and-Tan, sticking a revolver where her belt should have been. 'It's going home, I

am,' said Meg. 'For the love iv Heaven give me a copper.' 'It's a bullet I'll give you, you old vermin. Get into that lorry quick.' 'That,' says Meg, 'that! I'm after being a lady now. Och, and it's me great-grandfather who was after being a king.' 'You'll be after being a corpse if you don't get a move on.' They made a start, and suddenly she saw me. 'Hallo, dearie,' called out the descendant of kings, 'I'm curlewed!'"

"The Irish beggars are priceless," exclaimed the second priest, who had rolled and twisted with laughter until the tears ran down his cheeks. "You heard about the flower-women the day Lord French was attacked?"

"No," said our hostess. "Tell us, father."

"Two old flower-women watched the whole thing. 'Did ye see the bullets flying?' said one. 'I did, indeed, and a grand sight it was. Did ye see the boys all standing there cool and steady, firing at Lord French? And a lady with him. "Let me get out," sez she to he, "let me get out," sez she. "This is no place for me," sez she. "Let me get out," sez she. "You will not," sez he to she, "and you will not," sez he.'" "

"And now for a last story," said the second priest, getting up. "The other day a friend in Cork was searched by the Black-and-Tans just before Curfew, for arms, of course. As usual after going through his pockets, the gentleman went through his pocket-book, took all he had, which was five pounds, and also took his silver watch.

My friend, who isn't a man to sit down under things, went over to the officer in charge and said what had happened. The officer came up and told the Black-and-Tan to return the loot. The man grumbled and hauled out of his pocket a dozen watches, and a bundle of notes. 'Take which is yours,' he said, swinging the watches, and he held out a handful of notes. It was quite dark, and when my friend got under a light, he found he had got a gold watch for his silver one, and ten pounds for his five."

In the middle of the laughter that followed the story, the priest made his exit.

We followed suit, and we were not many steps on the way when the old lady I had noticed came up behind us.

"I have something to say," she said. "I hope you won't be influenced by what you hear over here. When I see strangers like you I am always so afraid of what will happen to them. The Irish are such good pleaders. But it's all lamentable. I am as Irish as anybody; but I wish this was over, with all my heart I wish it. It's not a clean war. It's having a frightful effect on the young men. Kill, kill, kill is all they think of now, it's all they talk of, and what will they have at the end of their lives, what battles can they fight over again? I can't sleep at night, I hear them talking as old men. 'I got him in his bath,' one will say. Another, 'I got him in bed.' And another, 'He was visiting his wife. I shot him at

tea.' They have dirtied Ireland's name, say what they will, they have done that. Doesn't the most sympathetic American squirm when you compare this to the American War of Independence? I think so. I read the other day of the Poles objecting to the comparison with the Polish struggle for freedom. People who hate England pretend to sympathise with us for their own ends; but there is not a nation that, at heart, does not hold our methods in contempt. We are called ditch murderers, and the expression is justified."

Her face was working with emotion. We had come to a corner. She said good night and was gone.

CHAPTER XV

HEIGHT OF THE TERROR

PASSING from bad to worse, the year drew to an end.

As if the fury of those days were breeding them and putting them upon the streets, the shaking lorries increased in number; and the flying Crossley tenders swept by in the hunt—hunting, hunting, hunting for the elusive foe, which was everywhere and nowhere—which was on the pavements, which was behind the counters of the shops, which was wrapped in the uniforms of tram conductor, of railway porter, of postman, which made use of any refuge that it might help the infant Republic to take a place among the nations.

Terrible tales were whispered in those final weeks of the dying year. Tales of frenzied men hunted by bloodhounds. Tales of pitiless ambushes, of police slaughtered to a man, and the bodies hacked to pieces with axes. Tales of savage reprisal following on shameful deed, of burned shops, of deserted farms, of peasants gone to couch with fox and hare. Tales of new proclamations and new restrictions falling alike on guilty and innocent.

“Auxiliary Division, R.I.C., the Castle,
Macrooom.”

“Whereas foul murders of servants of the Crown have been carried out by disaffected persons, and whereas such persons immediately before the said murders appeared to be peaceful and loyal people, but have produced pistols from their pockets; it is hereby ordered that all male inhabitants of Macrooom, and all males passing through Macrooom, shall not appear in public with their hands in their pockets. Any male infringing this order is liable to be shot at sight.”

Tales of bridges destroyed in the country places to impede the movement of Government troops, and other bridges leading to the market towns blown up as reprisal by forces of the Crown. Tales of gross murder of isolated police replied to by tales of blindfolded prisoners taken at dead of night to lonely places and there told they were to die, made to kneel praying and listen while a grave was dug, and this play-acting done, the victim promised life if he would say was his neighbour, the butcher, a peaceful citizen or a follower of Sinn Fein, did his friend, the bootmaker, who so amiably dusted his shop of a morning also in the dark of night dust a gun which came up from under the boards. And could the kneeling man rise to meet this fierce hour and refuse the information, his thwarted captors returned him to his cell.

Tales that the golden age of robbery had come. Criminals in all countries hear of the anarchy

abroad and take tickets to the distressed country. Armed men emerge from the lanes and the alley ways and rob by night and by day. It is whispered some of the robberies of the Ulster banks are carried out by Irish Volunteers acting under orders, it is shouted that some of the highway robberies are conducted by out-at-elbow Black-and-Tans, acting without orders and trying to turn an honest penny in an unfriendly land.

Then, in the midst of war, rumours of peace. The dove flutters a moment into sight, and takes wing again. Father O'Flanagan, Acting President of the Irish Republic, telegraphs to the British Prime Minister :—

“ You state that you are willing to make peace at once without waiting for Christmas. Ireland also is willing. What first steps do you propose ? ”

The telegram was sent when Sinn Fein was hard pressed. Many of the leaders were in prison, the rest were hunted day and night. It was imperative to keep a tight hold on supporters if the movement were to hold together. A sudden gesture of this kind might be taken as a sign of panic and begin a general rout. There was a day or two of heart-searching in the Republican camp, and ‘ Watch-man,’ in one of the Nationalist journals, came forward with the warning that if the nation was not to be stampeded it must remain as cold as ice, calm as a summer lake, and wary as a fox going on all its toes. The mysterious Michael Collins

emerged from his obscurity with a second letter in which he thanked nobody for refraining from murdering him, and told the nation to "stop talking, and get on with the work."

The dove clapped its wings and fled away, and ere the sound of its flight was lost news came that as reprisal for an ambush in the public thoroughfare, the City of Cork was in flames. The machinery of war was in motion again.

Deed of terror following deed of terror, the days wore out, Christmas came and went, and the year came to an end.

Hampered but still free, fettered but not completely bound, finding the draught of difficulty as a sick man finds a strengthening medicine, through all that came and went, Sinn Fein continued with the building up of the Republic. Republican Courts, which had been suppressed, continued in existence, sitting when and where they could, judges, lawyers, plaintiffs, defendants, and all the following of law, flitting from place to place like birds bereft of a nesting ground, against all legal tradition taught to be sparing of argument, as at the very moment of judgment, they might have to snatch up bag and baggage, and judge, lawyer, plaintiff, and defendant make tracks to the hills. Yet in the face of opposition, because of it, these courts met with considerable success. Clients arrived in the hope that the judgments given would be more lenient than in the established British Courts, clients came from patriotic motives, from

motives of adventure, and not least because they dared not stay away. Intimidation was present here as elsewhere.

For both parties in the struggle had great belief in the weapon of intimidation, and there was taking place one long competition in intimidation between the Crown Forces and the Republican Volunteers. The strange situation had arisen of two Governments claiming to rule the country, and neither one able to protect its adherents from the other, nor able to control its own extremists.

The inner circle of Sinn Fein held council when it could, framed its policy and issued its edicts. Cabinet Ministers might sleep each night in a new bed, those of them who were not sleeping night after night in one of his Britannic Majesty's prisons ; but their words were not without weight. In their offices in attics and in cellars, they built up the infant Republic.

It was told that the Minister of Finance found time to acknowledge all funds, although the very rumour of his name sent the gates of Dublin Castle back upon their hinges and a host of armed men abroad. Again and again his offices were captured, and his very signature found damp upon some cheque, yet with the choicest of his correspondence he was gone to some new attic, to some new cellar, there to begin again.

The Minister of Commerce, passing from place to place like any Ishmaelite, issued his edicts that

such and such British goods should be boycotted, and the unwilling shopkeepers dared not disobey.

The Minister of Propaganda, pedalling, pedalling his ubiquitous bicycle, interviewed foreign journalists, got together his facts for the day's issue of the *Irish Bulletin*, all the while thanking the dark for its cloak, thanking the cold for an excuse to muffle up.

So the work of the Departments was done, nor was it probable that it would be undone, for man thrives on difficulty. The danger to this national awakening was not then, it was going to be later on in the easy days of peace.

The old year came to an end, and the first day of the new year brought Sinn Fein Ireland a happy augury. It went from mouth to mouth that President De Valera had returned from America. Everywhere the question was put, "Is he come?" "Where has he landed?"

47, whom I ran across about this time, told me he received reliable information of the President's whereabouts within a few hours of the landing, and he had passed on the news to Headquarters. It was decided that no steps should be taken to arrest the President, and henceforward to the truce in June, the difficulty for the agents of the Crown was to avoid coming in contact with him.

This was not the story told by Sinn Fein, who made it known that the astute President, aided by the Republican secret service, was making ridiculous the clumsy efforts of the Crown Forces to

capture him, and patriots chuckled over their tea-cups. The awakening was a rude one. Auxiliary police, raiding the grounds of a house in the Black-rock district, found digging potatoes a mysterious person with side whiskers, who was possessed of important papers. He was escorted to the nearest barracks, where it transpired he was no less a man than the President of the Irish Republic. He received an apology and was released.

The patriots of the teatables were thunderstruck, and more insulted than if their President had been maltreated. Some there were who received a shock from which they never recovered.

It was in these dark days my wife and I first made acquaintance with A. E., first saw presiding over a circle interested in mysticism and the occult this benevolent and rather giant person, wrapped up in an ancient greatcoat, and all crowded into a chair. There was not a wrinkle to speak of in his face, as if a serene mind had allowed him to pass trouble by, and through his spectacles looked out eyes as blue as the sky.

On the wall were two pictures by his hand of visions he had seen in some uncommon hour. For this man, who is gaining an international reputation, was many-sided, and each side exceeded the stature of an average man.

He was a painter of some ability, and better than his painting was his poetry, and better than his poetry was his prose, and better than his prose were his ideas ; and more astonishing than his ideas

was the facility for expressing them. He seemed informed on half the subjects in the world, and a question would start the stream of eloquence flowing. Never was there such an example of rich payment received from trained concentration and years of clear thinking.

The new year started as the old year had ended in fury and ruin.

One of the dreariest of those afternoons, when evening was sweeping up out of the Liffey in the guise of a river fog, I found myself upon O'Connell Bridge watching a line of soldiers holding up traffic and searching motor cars. Standing there as chilly of thought as I was chilly of body, I became intuitive like a prophet, so that I was ready to open my mouth and prophesy.

Militant Sinn Fein had reached the limit of its popularity with the nation, the swing of the pendulum had got to its end and would come back again. It had been a melancholy task for loyal people watching the Republican ideal spreading through the country like a disease, finding week by week the British Empire losing the Irish nation, first by tens, then by hundreds, then by thousands, and for this reason above others, that Irishmen—be their opinions wrong, be their deeds wrong—were being hunted down in Ireland. The case of the deserting Unionists was the case of the man who is willing to beat his own wife, but who takes her part when an outsider appears to do the business.

Waiting on the bridge this evening, watching

the fog rise off the river and the soldiers search the cars as they drove up, I knew the Sinn Fein militant policy had reached the limit of national sympathy and patience. As restrictions grew worse, as trade grew worse, that numerically greatest portion of the population to whom ideals are a consideration secondary to material prosperity, would look more and more askance at the people who were bringing them to ruin.

The Republican cry was a false cry as far as the Irish nation was concerned. Only a minority of the people were genuine in a desire for the Republic, and many who shouted "Up the Republic" had no idea what they meant. A band of enthusiasts had struck a spark, and now the country was wrapped in the flames of a national passion; but the majority of the people had been caught in the conflagration through circumstance. The psychology of the crowd had operated, the spirit of the herd.

Now that the youth of Ireland, who had been cheated of the European war, had had a fill of struggle, the time was at hand when the wise fireman, dragging his hose after him, might get into position to put the fire out.

Ireland suffered under a genuine grievance. The taxation was unjust; there were other injustices. But if a truce could be called and an offer made which put right what had before been wrong, the dream of a Republic would pass away as a man's dream passes away in the morning. Let the tension be slackened and life find its true

values again, and all the shouts left in the throats of the true Republicans would not trouble the nation again. The effort had been used up, and the gods do not give such passion twice in a generation. They are chary of their gifts.

Thinking this, I waited on the bridge, wondering how long would go by before some one in the crowd fired at the soldiers, whereupon the soldiers would return the compliment, and there would follow a stampede, and I would be offered the choice of being shot to death or crushed to death. But nobody drew a gun on this occasion, though another time, very soon afterwards, I was on the same spot, and somebody in the crowd threw a bomb or fired a shot, somebody who was well down a side street a moment afterwards, and the soldiers fired into the brown as I expected, and a woman was killed.

But the dove of peace, which had fluttered into sight for a day or two before Christmas, had fled away, and was not yet to be seen back again, and during these first weeks of the new year it became evident that spirit was to descend yet farther into matter.

I take the following quotations haphazard from issues of the *Irish Bulletin* (the Republican organ) of that date. Such remedies as these were tried to cope with the situation.

“ On Saturday night, January 1st, Auxiliary Police raided a dance hall in Lisduff, co. Leitrim. The dance was interrupted, and the dancers questioned and searched. They were then compelled

to sing 'God save the King' and denounce President De Valera, after which they were ordered out of the dance hall, shots being fired after them."

"A Proclamation has been issued by Major-General Strickland, English Military Governor in Cork, prohibiting the use of motor-cars, motor-cycles, and pedal cycles between 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. in the Martial Law area, which now extends over one-third of Ireland. This order comes into force on the 20th inst."

"On the afternoon of Friday, January 14th, 1921, Auxiliary Police arrested So-and-so. All the men were prominent merchants in the town. . . . The men were taken to the local barracks and were then formed into a procession and compelled to march through the town carrying Union Jacks and trailing the Republican flag in the dust. An itinerant musician was compelled to head the procession playing a banjo. At the rear of the procession a large party of Black-and-Tan Constabulary drove in a motor lorry cheering and shouting. After they had marched through the town the merchants were forced to kneel down in the public street and kiss the Union Jack, whilst the Constabulary burned the Republican flag."

"On Wednesday, January 26th, Constabulary rounded up many of the prominent residents of Fermoy, co. Cork, marched them to the bridge in the centre of the town, where they were compelled to paint on the walls such inscriptions as 'God save the King.' 'God bless the Black-and-Tans.' "

"On Friday, January 28th, at Leitrim, men of all ages and classes were commandeered by Constabulary and marched to parts of the road were 'ambushes might occur.' There they were com-

pelled to fell trees and cut down hedges on both sides of the roads."

"On Wednesday, February 2nd, a number of the residents of Glanworth, co. Cork, were commandeered and were marched out of the village. They were then compelled to remove trees which had been felled across the roads (by the I.R.A.) some time previously."

"On February 4th military and constabulary rounded up over a hundred men in Listowel, co. Kerry, including elected representatives, merchants, professional men, etc., formed them up into parties and marched them out of the town to various country roads across which trenches had some time previously been dug. There the parties were given picks and spades and compelled under threats of being shot to fill in the trenches. The weather was very inclement, and no discrimination was made in selecting the victims—age or illness being no protection. Mr. John W. Galvin, proprietor of the Central Hotel, who was suffering from heart affection and asthma, was among those forced to fill the trenches. During the work he complained of heart trouble, but was compelled to continue. While being marched back to town he fell dead."

From the *Irish Independent* of January 1st.

"Martin Conway, one of the victims near Bruff, is stated to have crawled four miles after he had been wounded, while he was acting as a sentry near Caherguillamore House. He was tracked by a bloodhound, which had accompanied the police party, and he immediately fired at the hound, killing him; but was himself killed by the return fire. Mr. Conway was a prominent Sinn Feiner, and had been on the run."

Independent of January 4th.

“Afterwards, it was stated, a bloodhound was employed in a search for Tobin, and a pool of blood was found on the mountain where the wounded man had evidently rested. On Sunday morning his dead body was found within a hundred yards of his mother’s house, whither he had evidently crawled from some place of hiding during the night. He had his coat under his head, and had evidently lain down to die.”

Tragic to read? Yes. Regrettable to read? Yes. But the Crown Forces were victims of circumstances no less than were the Irish Volunteers. The trouble began by Britain refusing to concede certain Irish claims; this led to outrage, and outrage to reprisals, and reprisals to a state of civil war. The reprisals were carried out to intimidate (and to a certain extent the reprisals did justify themselves), to satisfy thwarted effort, out of contempt. I have spoken to several Auxiliary Police, humane men, men who had taken part in the European War, and not one of them spoke of the Sinn Feiner as an enemy and an equal, as he might have spoken of a Frenchman or a German. If it were suggested the reprisals were unworthy, the answer would be, “Good enough for them, the swine!”

Yet the Irish Volunteer believed himself to be serving an ideal. I quote an extract from General Lawson’s report, dated December 30th.

“The captains . . . appear to have been . . . as a class, transparently sincere and single-minded, idealists, highly religious for the most part, and

often with an almost religious sense of their duty to their country. . . . They fought against drunkenness and self-indulgence, and it is no exaggeration to say that as a class they represented all that was best in the countryside. . . . They and their volunteers were trained to discipline, they imbibed the military spirit, and then as now they looked upon their army as one in a very real sense, an organisation demanding implicit obedience and self-abnegation from rank to rank. . . . They stood for much that is best in human nature. . . . There is a spirit of a nation behind the organisation . . . sympathising with and believing that those who belong to the I.R.A. are fighting for the cause of the Irish people."

The Irish Volunteers, lacking numbers and equipment, were forced to conduct the fight by any method they could, and the Crown Forces, if they were to get in a blow at all, had frequently to get down on hands and knees, and meet the enemy on their own level. Such are the humours of life.

Surely the gods must laugh as they watch, or, indeed, are they wiser than man believes, and order these complex events that he, weary of reading from the old lesson book, may have his attention caught by old truths put in a new way, and learn again the lessons of fortitude and restraint.

January came to an end, February came to an end, and the disastrous tale of deeds continued ; but the days were getting longer, and the cold was going out of the air, and a man felt when the sun came back again, peace also might return.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MINISTER OF PROPAGANDA

ONE March morning Mrs. Slaney rapped at the door. Himself was out. I put down my pen with a sigh.

"I see you have 'engaged' on the door," she said cheerfully, "but I must come in for a moment to tell you something. It's very bad for you to sit writing like this, you should be out in the sun. We don't get much sunshine as a rule at this time of the year."

She shut the door, walked over to the sofa, and lowered her voice.

"I've let the hall flat," she said. "I had to come and tell you."

"But you let it yesterday?"

"I know . . . but"—she rustled with excitement—"but I am writing at once to put those people off. On second consideration, it is most unsuitable. They are so young and only just married, later on it might mean a baby, and I have to consider my other tenants, you and your husband, for instance. You remember I asked you before I took that musical man upstairs. There's a

great art in making a household run on oiled wheels."

"You're pleased with the people coming to-day, then?"

She hesitated, and then she said, "I must tell you. I trust you. I know you won't talk." She must have thought I looked puzzled, for she went on nervously, "I've let the hall flat to Mrs. Fitzgerald." She paused to see the effect of her words. "Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald. Her husband is Minister of Propaganda. Now I feel that I've done something for Ireland! No one will take her, they are so afraid of raids; but I made up my mind at once."

"Mr. Darrel Figgis has made this place rather popular with the Black-and-Tans. Is it wise from Mrs. Fitzgerald's point of view?"

"Of course it is. I met Mr. Figgis only yesterday, and he told me he was sure the house wouldn't be raided again."

"How on earth can he tell?"

"Mr. Figgis has a wonderful brain. I think he's the brains of the movement myself. Besides, I'm not afraid of the Black-and-Tans. I'm an Irishwoman. Look at the sacrifices Irishwomen have made. Mr. Fitzgerald isn't going to live here. He's coming sometimes after dark for meals. Mrs. Fitzgerald and the baby will be here. I don't want the people upstairs to know who she is. After all, Fitzgerald is a common enough name. They can think she's a widow."

"There's a baby. I thought you wouldn't have a baby?"

"But this baby is a grown baby. It's eleven months old, and its mother says it's a very good baby, it makes no noise at all."

"Of course, one can only prove that."

"There's one other thing." Mrs. Slaney moved uneasily. "It's about the baths. You and your husband have always had as many baths as you wanted. We must make a little difference in that rule now, and treat you like the others. This weather you can't want more than two baths a week. Perhaps in summer we can make some other arrangement." She went on to the Minister of Propaganda. "Poor man, he will be delighted to get a flat where he can have his meals in comfort. He's been on the run for a long time now. It's shameful an Irishman should have to live like that. I shall soon get to know Mrs. Fitzgerald, the baby will be the link; and I shall hear everything that is going on. I must go and write my letter."

When I spoke to Himself about it afterwards, he said, "I suppose those people will be all right here. I wouldn't like to go bail. Since the last raid men always seem hanging about. I suppose they give the house a look up now and then. The less we know about things the better."

But we were not the only people in the house with forebodings.

A week later, when Mrs. Fitzgerald had already been settled in a day or two, the door opened

cautiously and Mrs. O'Grady, dustpan in hand, came in with the air of a conspirator.

"The mistress is after setting the hall flat," she said mysteriously.

"I know. I thought they had been in a day or two."

"It's bad luck she's bringing on everybody. She's always that frightened she'll not be noticed. She'll be noticed now. Never fear, the Black-and-Tans will be burning the place down one night."

"Mrs. O'Grady, what do you mean?"

"She's not telling you who's in the house, not she. She's a mean, mean woman, and it's black trouble she's bringing on us all. Well I know it. I do say to O'Grady of a night that your husband, mum, is the only gentleman as has been in this house since the Captain left as had these rooms before you, and he wasn't any great gentleman so as to speak. She doesn't know how to treat nice people when she does get them. She's set her flat to Desmond Fitzgerald, that's what she's after doing."

"Mrs. O'Grady!"

"I do be going blind, but not so blind; and it's himself as had his pictures in the papers not long ago. God help him. It's on the run he's been ever since the Sunday shootings, though a more innocent man never drew breath I'm hearing those who know say. It's the mistress will bring trouble on him if he sets a foot in this house. It's 'Mrs. O'Grady,' she'll be saying, 'hold your tongue or I'll

get shot iv ye.' But she'll tell. There's not one person she'll meet that she won't tell, she'll be that swollen with pride."

"You've seen him?"

"Indeed and I have. He comes on his bicycle after dark, and he knocks and she lets him in. Did ye hear the set-to with the mistress and Mrs. Fitzgerald over the key last night? Now she won't give Mrs. Fitzgerald a second latchkey, and himself there standing on the steps of a night with all the Black-and-Tans in Dublin looking at him. I've seen him indeed; but I wouldn't know him, for he's that quiet he won't look at ye, and he's muffled up round the neck that ye can't say what's his eyes and what's his chin."

"Well, let's do our parts and not talk."

"And who should I be talking to? There's only O'Grady and Polly, who's sharp enough herself for a young girl, God save her, and on Sundays I go to my sister regular, and she so full of her own troubles that she's no time for mine. Will you be wanting your tea now?"

"No, thank you, Mrs. O'Grady; I'll make it myself later."

"And what would you be doing that for at all? I'll be wetting my own tea when I do go down, and I'll do yours at the same time and send it up by Polly."

Mrs. O'Grady was about to withdraw when she waxed enthusiastic.

"The baby, he's a dote!" she exclaimed,

"a dote, and exactly like his father, and there are two beautiful boys away at school, real dotes. There's a photo of them on the mantelpiece. My legs are run off me this minute what with the mistress upstairs and Mrs. Fitzgerald downstairs, and it's extra she's after charging for the flat; but it's no extra she's after giving me."

"Well, I hope they'll be all right."

"Indeed, mum, and I don't like it, not at all, at all. Only the other morning, when the luggage was outside the door, three men passed and looked down into the area, and Polly says they were Black-and-Tans in civies."

"Rubbish, Mrs. O'Grady, they couldn't know already."

"Couldn't they?" She tossed her head. "Couldn't they?" she repeated darkly. "There's trouble coming to this house, and don't you forget it."

She gave a sniff and departed.

CHAPTER XVII

CAPTURE OF A CABINET MINISTER

HIMSELF was out; but I was not alone. Mrs. Slaney sat upon my sofa, and Mrs. Slaney smoked a cigarette, and once again Mrs. Slaney poured into my dulled ears the story of Ireland's martyrdom.

"It's going to be a cold night," she said, in the middle of a fiery sentence.

"Cold?" My voice was like the night. "I must take my bulbs in from the window; I don't want them frost nipped now." I rose and went to the window and opened it with difficulty, for the sash had never been mended.

"I really mustn't stay long," said Mrs. Slaney, staying where she was. "I have letters to write. Are those tulips? They have come on."

"Yes." I carefully placed the last pot on the floor, shut the window carefully, and crawled up from my lowly position on the floor. There was silence for a moment after that. Mrs. Slaney smoked thoughtfully, and I returned to my seat.

Suddenly the silence was broken by a shrill whistle. It made us start.

"I wonder if Mr. Fitzgerald is in?" said Mrs. Slaney suddenly.

"I don't know," I said, staring from the lighted room into the dark outside.

"You hear him come and go, I suppose?"

"I seldom hear people come and go. I don't listen. After all, it doesn't interest me."

"I always feel so uneasy when he's in the house. Poor hunted man! You've not seen him, I suppose?"

I shook my head. "Never."

"Awful for Mrs. Fitzgerald! Those brutes might shoot him at any moment. But I suppose she's used to it."

"Perhaps he gets a certain amount of fun out of the life. No man can call it dull eluding the Black-and-Tans."

"Fun! Being hunted to death like the vermin of the fields. Fun! Battered from pillar to post. The military are getting more and more audacious. I often wonder where they will stop. Women are frightened to have a bath now in case they come in, and they raided a convent the other day. Thank goodness, there was an outcry at that! A convent which had never admitted a man inside it. And at night. I heard the Mother Superior said the nuns behaved magnificently, there was no outcry from them, and when it was all over they went to the Chapel and tendered thanks to the Blessed Virgin that they had come to no harm."

"I heard it said that the raid was conducted with great civility."

"Yes. I believe those special raiders were not

a bad lot of men. But the indignity of it ! Would nuns intrigue and be interested in politics ? ”

“ I really couldn’t say. You know best, of course. But there must have been some reason for the raid.”

“ None whatever. It was simply to show their power. The love of terrifying people. But they didn’t terrify the nuns.”

“ A Unionist told me the other day that the Irish question would be settled only when education was taken completely out of the Church’s hands and no religion was taught in the schools. I believe he’s right.”

“ Every man and woman worth the name in Ireland would die before they consented to such a thing.”

“ It’ll come to pass. What’s really wrong with Ireland is religion. You can say what you like. The religion is distorted, people aren’t balanced about it. I’d like to see a wave of agnosticism pass through the country, and after that people might take up religion at its true value.”

“ Of course we both think so differently. But I tell you that such a thing can never happen in this country.”

A blaze of light shone suddenly into the room. There were loud sounds of throbbing engines. We both started to our feet when a knock, which should have roused all the dead in Ireland, shook the front door.

Mrs. Slaney’s hand flew to her heart.

"What's that?" I hardly heard her voice above the noise.

She moved towards the door and then back again. Again the house was shaken with the knocking.

Mrs. Slaney put out the light.

"Don't do that," I said sharply. "You'll draw fire."

She put it up again, and ran out of the room and halfway up the stairs, as if she remembered something. Then she turned and came back.

I went out on the landing. By this time Polly had opened the front door, and figures in uniform poured into the hall. "Open that door," the first man ordered, pointing at the Fitzgeralds' sitting-room. "Wide." Polly obeyed, and the stream poured in. Others were coming up the stairs when a shout, "Got him!" halted them. "It's all right, boys!" The people on the stairs went down into the hall again, and began to go through the pockets of the coats hanging there.

"His bicycle!" exclaimed the officer in charge. "Put her on board, some one."

Mrs. Slaney and I leant over the stairs. I wondered if Mrs. Fitzgerald felt as upset as I did.

The murmur of voices mounted all the time from the flat below. There was an occasional laugh. Through the half-opened door, which showed us the sitting-room, we could see the baby laughing and being handed round by the Auxiliaries. The infant Fergus created a good atmosphere, and

seemed delighted with his new friends, who had wakened him to search the cot. Finally Mrs. Slaney gathered herself together for the attack.

The Auxiliaries seemed delighted with their capture, and were obviously ready to be amiable. Mrs. Slaney descended upon them, her wooden heels tapping as she walked, and the light from the hall lamp glinted on a tortoiseshell comb that rose from her hair.

“Who is the officer in command of the raid?” she demanded.

A youthful Auxiliary turned towards her, the baby kicking in his arms. His revolvers rested peacefully round his waist and in holsters on his legs.

“The officer in charge.” He beamed upon her as a friend.

A tall gaunt man, with a face like a red Indian, appeared in the doorway.

“Who wants me?”

“Are you the officer in charge of this raid?”

“Yes, madam. Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Are you the blackguard who murdered those unfortunate boys at Drumcondra the other night?”

A cold shiver ran down my spine. Mrs. O’Grady, hovering in the shadows in the hall, withdrew to the basement. I heard the shuffle of her sandshoes.

“Will some one take the baby, please?”

Mrs. Fitzgerald, unconscious of the question or of the storm it raised, came out of the sitting-room.

“He ought to be asleep. Where’s Mrs. O’Grady? She could take him downstairs.”

I went down and took the baby, while Mrs. Slaney and the chief of Auxiliaries eyed each other.

“What reason have you for arresting this man in my house?” Mrs. Slaney demanded. “A perfectly innocent man.”

“Enough, madam.” Like Pharaoh, the man had hardened his heart. “Are you the owner of this house?”

“I am.”

“Then perhaps you can explain why you let this flat to a rebel.”

“I let the rooms to Mrs. Fitzgerald,” Mrs. Slaney corrected.

“You didn’t know who she was, I suppose? Come, Mrs. Slaney, did you know who Fitzgerald was or not?”

“I let the rooms to his wife. He only has his meals.”

“You are in a very serious position, Mrs. Slaney. Do you know the penalty for harbouring rebels?”

I was mounting the stairs with the infant Fergus, to tuck him up on our sofa, when I ran into the musical man who lived over our heads.

“Do you think they’ll search the house?” he said.

“If Mrs. Slaney annoys them enough they will.”

“I’ve a paper here—they don’t search women,” he suggested.

The infant Fergus whimpered at that moment,

and I rolled him up on our sofa. The man of music had followed me. He held a newspaper cutting in his hand.

"I got this out of the paper this morning. They mightn't like it."

I read it. "There's nothing in it."

"You wouldn't keep it?"

"Oh, I'll keep it; but burn it if you like and get another paper to-morrow." As I spoke I put it in my pocket. He was very young.

Mrs. Slaney bustled into the room, her eyes flickering.

"The unfortunate man! They'll murder him before he reaches the Castle. She's taken it wonderfully; but what else would you expect from an Irish woman? Did you hear that man talking to me? The brutality of him. But he couldn't frighten me. Can you let me have a scarf? It's such a cold night, and I promised Mrs. Fitzgerald to let her husband have mine; but it's a long way upstairs."

I got Himself's own scarf, and followed after her as she bustled downstairs with it. Preparations for departure were going forward. I heard Mrs. O'Grady sniffing in the dark under the stairs.

"Ready?" said the man in charge.

I could just hear Mr. Fitzgerald's answer. Mrs. Fitzgerald tucked his neck with eager fingers. She followed him to the step.

"Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

The clutches grated as the lorries turned. The armoured car rolled after them. In a minute it was all dark again outside.

I went to the basement to find what Mrs. O'Grady was doing. She was in tears on a chair near the fire.

"I'll never get over this night, at all, at all. And him with his lovely hair and his beautiful smile; him that will be dead before morning. It's lucky you are. It's you have your scarf round the neck of a fine young Irishman, and O'Grady's is there, too, for I gave it to him last thing. Sure, but I do be glad he's finished his dinner, it's the last dinner he'll take maybe. And there's his tea, not half drunk in his cup, just as he left it. I hadn't it in me heart to throw it away. It's black trouble has been brought on us all, and it's blacker will come."

She rose from her chair and produced a box of matches from some mysterious pocket, and lighted the gas stove for me.

"God help him!" she exclaimed. "There's his tea."

CHAPTER XVIII

WINTER WEARS OUT

OUR road came in for a spell of peace after the departure of the Minister of Propaganda. From time to time other houses up and down the way had been looked up by the Crown Forces ; but for a while the neighbourhood seemed to pass out of the public eye, and the lorries rolled down other streets.

I had been out when the Auxiliaries made their call, and I returned to find a gaping congregation at the mouth of our street, and outside our house the glaring headlights of an armoured car, and two great shadowy lorries, which were filling up again with men. As I reached the door, a neighbour, on tiptoe with excitement, called from her top doorstep, "They've raided your house again, and they've taken a man out of it."

I had come as the curtain was falling. The engines of the lorries were humming, and first one lorry moved off and then the next, and the armoured car rolled on their heels. In a few moments the street, which had been filled with noise, became

quiet again, heads went in from windows, and people retreated from doorsteps.

But our door remained open, and on the top step, in the hall light, stood a little group of women: Mrs. Slaney, upright and defiant, Mrs. Fitzgerald gazing wistfully into the dark, and my wife.

"What do you think of this?" Mrs. Slaney demanded, turning terribly upon me as I came up the steps. "Any honest Englishman must blush for what his Government does."

While I was searching for a happy answer, Mrs. Fitzgerald said something which gave me a peep into her mind.

"If it weren't for the work," she said, "it's a good thing in some ways that this has happened. There was always the chance he might be shot in the street. He's safer where he is. And he wanted a rest."

"There you are, Mabel," said a voice, and Miss Gavan Duffy, sister of the Sinn Fein Ambassador to Rome, came up the steps.

"They've just taken him," Mrs. Fitzgerald said.

"I heard," Miss Gavan Duffy answered, making me wonder at the speed at which news travelled among them.

Mrs. Fitzgerald had become all energy. "I shall have to go down and let the newspapers know," she said. "They'll have it in to-morrow morning like that. Once it's in the papers the Castle people are less likely to do anything to him."

"I expect he'll be all right, Mabel," Miss Gavan Duffy suggested. "There's not much time for you before Curfew."

"Are you expecting anything to happen to him?" I asked.

Mrs. Fitzgerald turned in my direction. "It will be all right if I let the papers know he has been taken. The Castle people can't deny things then. It's on the way to the Castle and during interrogation that our people sometimes come in for a bad time. Once they are properly lodged they are all right. Desmond will probably be interrogated to-night. There is a captain"—I forget now what name she said—"who was wounded in the war and seems to be a degenerate. He takes a delight in torturing our people. Desmond may come before him to-night. It makes a difference whom our boys go before when they are up for interrogation."

Before the night was much older, I believe Mrs. Fitzgerald, true to her word, was on her way down town to hand in her news at the newspaper offices.

We saw very little of her at first after that evening. She lived underneath us with a nurse and the infant son, Fergus. There were two other boys at school.

There was no more tireless worker in the Republican cause. She worked all day, and for a while after her husband went she worked all night—keeping his propaganda work up to date, I suppose. Mrs. O'Grady, kneeling on a piece of newspaper before our sitting-room fire of a morning,

would sniff and say, "That woman's light is never out. That woman's writing there all night. She'll kill herself if she doesn't mind. She's that pale each morning she looks like a ghost. And what now, if the Black-and-Tans come back again and find what she's got there?"

"Och, Mrs. O'Grady, indade and these do be terrible times," I would answer.

When Mrs. Fitzgerald was not at work below she was in the streets, hurrying, no doubt on the business of the Republic, from house to house. She never walked, she went always at a trot. She seemed always behind time, always at the end of her tether; always ready for any new work that might have to be done. If all she did in a day were well done, she must have been one of the most useful members of the Cumann na mBan.

Yet, as was the case with numerous other prominent women, the British Government never took steps to put an end to her activities, though it was common knowledge that as the men were taken, the work fell more and more upon the shoulders of women.

For days after her husband's arrest, Mrs. Fitzgerald kept very much to herself, partly, no doubt, because of her press of work, partly because her work was confidential; but also, I think, because she was sensitive and loth to intrude.

In the beginning it was "Good morning," if we passed in the hall or in the street; then she came up one day to get the address of some publishers

for her husband's plays, and so the acquaintance made headway. One evening, on some errand or other, I penetrated for the first time into her sitting-room.

She was reading at the table in the small circle of light cast by the lamp, and she looked immensely lonely. It was as though there was just the circle of light where she sat reading, and outside that the dark—the dark room with high lights here and there on the bookcases, the dark city in a greater circle outside, and encircling the city the darkness one felt resting over the land, over the troubled world for that matter. I do not know if she felt as I felt about this, she looked as lonely as any creature I have seen.

I cannot recall whether we had said “good evening”—we had said no more than that—when furiously, wildly on the silence, a volley of shots burst out near Stephen's Green, abruptly as light flashing out of darkness. The shooting continued for several seconds, seconds which any one unused to shooting would have reckoned as minutes, and then wore out in the customary fashion, odd shots coming from a greater and greater distance, as if a running fight was moving away from us.

Mrs. Fitzgerald threw up her head, not in fear, hardly with a startled movement; but as though hearing the battle afar off, the thunders of the captains and the shouting. I forget what we said at the end of the shooting, remarks were fatuous in the circumstances; but in those moments I had

seen more clearly than ever before the stupendous waste of energy caused by man not having learned to work in harmony with man.

If ever there had been an attempt to reach the truth of the Irish story, that effort had long ago been expended. Nobody wanted the truth now, neither Loyalist nor Republican, and it was difficult to remain in Ireland and be a bystander. It was necessary to take up the cudgels for one side or the other, and to lie for the side you chose.

That honest men were to be found holding to either opinion, and that rogues were to be found holding to either opinion was as absolutely a fact as that there had just been firing going on ; but neither man, woman, nor child desired such an unpalatable truth. It suited the Republicans to label all members of the Crown Forces as jailbirds and assassins, to state this for propaganda purposes at the tops of their voices, to bludgeon themselves into believing it to be the case.

It suited the Loyalists to call the Irish Volunteers a murder gang, though the long resistance of the Republican army, and the numbers enlisted in the ranks had long confounded this statement. It suited Loyalists to hypnotise themselves into this belief, otherwise they might have stopped short with their mouths open in the middle of a shout, and demanded of one another was there not some justice in the Republican cause.

Faugh ! a man grows cynical if he contemplates too long this state of things, and asks himself what

is any controversy other than a handful of thinking men leading a mob against a second handful of thinking men leading a mob, and the mob some blundering animal which can be made wild or tame as it is stroked or beaten. Never is it fed with the truth.

Yet fundamentally all men are the same.

Those Black-and-Tans, those Auxiliary Police who had been shopping in Grafton Street at Christmas, went shopping in armoured lorries, and when the lorry stopped at the shop door, and the shoppers went inside, guards with rifles were posted in the street. Such trouble and risks did these people take that their wives, their children, and their friends should be remembered at this time.

And no doubt the Republican Volunteers, such of them as were lying out on the bleak hillsides, such of them as frequently had to retreat into caves, turned in thought at Christmas to such gentle things as mothers, lovers, wives, and children and their toys. A few months after this struggle was done, the "murder gang" and "Hamar Greenwood's assassins" would be living as friends again.

Waste ! Waste !

Looking at this woman who sat here so lonely, who once must have been pretty and still was good-looking, with the light from the lamp falling upon her fair hair, which was neither gold nor brown nor red nor auburn, but a blend of those colours, I felt the pity of the fact that she was using her energies against the British nation instead of with it.

She had chosen the thorny instead of the smooth path of life, for I understand she had been reared in easy circumstances ; she had borne three children during her difficulties, she had witnessed raid and arrest, she had had her furniture and clothes destroyed, and she had had to do battle for herself and her children while her husband was in prison. She was tireless in helping on the Republic, which was her creed, and she never complained. She was only one of others like herself.

All day long and all night long the lorries and the armoured cars rolled up and down the streets, and the patrols of armed men tramped round the corners—Loyalist energy to meet this Republican energy. What waste that the two energies should be employed against each other !

Or is it that the gods have longer vision than mortal men, and afflict man with an idea that, like rain upon a plant, difficulty shall water his spirit, and it shall sprout and flourish ? Is it that men live and live again, the spirit working in matter and mastering it life by life ? If this be so there seems a plan in confusion, use in wasted effort, hope in hopelessness.

The acquaintance with Mrs. Fitzgerald grew, though circumstance set limits upon it. Her work kept her to herself. All sorts of people used to call, and I do not doubt some of them were of interest to the British authorities. Once she must have held a meeting of some importance, because a picket, who seemed to have cross eyes, stood

outside the house and glared at me when I came home, and I thought he was there to assassinate me.

But though we never shared the secrets of her work, the acquaintance grew, and she gave us peeps into her life.

She was an out-and-out Republican, and contemplated nothing short of the Republic. I was sure she was doomed to disappointment, and hinted this once. She answered :

“ It we do not get a Republic at the end of this, there will always be a Republican party, and I shall belong to it. We will never give up the Republic.” A minute later she said an illuminating thing. “ We are not in sympathy with England. We would sooner make an alliance with some country like France.”

Although she held extreme views and had suffered for them, I found her far less bitter in her statements about the enemy than the sympathisers who gave sympathy as a sole contribution to the movement. She spoke of the Crown Forces in a professional manner as part of the obstacles to be got out of the way. She would have shown them no mercy ; but she bore them no more rancour than was necessary. She was used to dealing with them, knew all the tricks of the trade, and made use of her advantages.

This same Mrs. Fitzgerald, I came to find out, mother of three children, woman of so many duties that she went at a jog-trot in the streets, this Mrs. Fitzgerald was a most romantic person. Her first

hero had been Padraig Pierce, a leader of the 1916 Rising, and she had called one of her boys after him. The man to fill his place was Michael Collins, Mick as she called him, the Republican Minister of Finance, who used to be spoken of as "a certain minister," the phrase whispered from person to person, as if his name spoken aloud would blast the lips that uttered it.

She spoke quite simply of being battered from pillar to post, of having her household gods damaged, of doing without them, of the frequent difficulty of getting a roof over her head, yet I believe she thought wistfully now and then of the fleshpots she had given up for the Republic. She reminded me of those women who have been drudges for the sake of their children, and who point fiercely at what they have produced when some scented, jewelled creature passes by.

I have spoken of her at length, because she represented a type of Irish woman whose sincerity and generosity could not be denied.

Seldom a day went by without sound of explosion near or far, seldom a night went through without shooting, it might be an intermittent shot or two or a sudden volley breaking out wildly on the quiet, followed by desultory shooting, growing fainter as the exchange of shots passed down distant streets.

It was too early yet for the weather to be charitable, for days to lengthen appreciably or nights to shorten; but one had the fancy that the sun was

on the way back from happier lands, and when it returned peace might come with it, that honourable peace without which neither side would stay a hand, that honourable peace which seemed so impossible to conceive and to bring about.

It was a case of wish being father to the thought, for matters were continuing to go from bad to worse. The Republican Volunteers appeared to be adopting a bolder policy, and some of the skirmishes which took place deserved the name. From the private citizen's point of view, the situation had become a great deal worse. Volunteers had taken to ambushing the military lorries in the streets, and this method of campaign was the last drop in the cup of woe of the peace-loving person.

The arguments the Republicans put forward for this step were sufficiently sound in their way. They declared the enemy used the streets on their work of raid and arrest, and obtained special protection. Where the Republican policy was most open to criticism was in the fact that the Volunteers made flagrant use of the protection afforded by the crowd.

The Volunteers could have operated in deserted places, the outlying streets and so on ; but such a course increased personal risks. There was greater likelihood of discovery from loitering, there was more chance of coming under the return fire from police lorries, and the neighbouring getaways would not be good. When a busy street was decided on, it was chosen for its escapes, for the opportunities

afforded the ambushers of mingling with the crowd until the chosen moment, and thirdly, because, after the attack, the Volunteers could become the crowd again, and the ambushed troops would not know where to shoot.

In nine cases out of ten it was the inoffensive citizen who paid the penalty of other people's political views. In the exchange of fire some harassed bystander was generally brought to the ground. Finally, public nerves were so stretched that sudden explosions brought about stampedes, and it is on record that the backfire of a motor-cycle caused women near at hand to faint.

The climax was the Grafton Street ambush, when sixteen passers were wounded by bomb splinters. There were no casualties among the police, and the ambushers got away unscathed.

It is possible in the beginning there were more casualties among the Crown Forces than were acknowledged ; but casualties on either side were few. On the heels of the weapon of offence follows always the defensive weapon. It was not long before stout wire netting, sloped at such an angle that bombs aimed at the lorries rolled off on to the ground, was stretched over the tops of the lorries. "Chook, chook, chook !" cried the rebel children as the police flew by, and the following mot went the rounds of Dublin, "The Boers put them in khaki, the Germans put the tin hats on them ; but it took the Sinn Feiners to put them into cages."

"Four years, five years," Mrs. Erskine Childers

said to me one day, "our people can carry on like this, and by that time England will have experienced a social upheaval and Ireland will have come into her own."

In truth, the Irish people would never be overcome by this glorified police hunt. Though the leaders might be netted one by one, others would spring up like wheat in their places. Where one man went down another would rise up. Old women of seventy carried the guns to the Volunteers in the fields. Children as high as one's hip acted as spies and messengers. The nation was in travail, but the nation was exalted. The military force which the British Government saw fit to use could only bleed, it could not kill.

CHAPTER XIX

MRS. O'GRADY'S FOREBODINGS

MRS. O'GRADY rose from the ashes in the fender one morning, and balancing herself so that she threw her minimum weight on her bad leg, said :

"They do be saying that poor Mike Collins is dead."

"Michael Collins ! "

"Himself. I was after hearing it from my priest, who knows the priest who attended him." She sniffed.

"But, if he is dead, why should they hide it ? "

"And why should they tell ? Mike's given the Government a long run for him sure enough, and faith they're running still. But he's dead and buried for all that under another name." She sniffed and lowered her voice. "People do be saying as how all those officers were shot for him, and there'll be worse to come."

"I don't believe he's dead. It would surely slip out."

"Nothing slips out in Ireland if it's not wanted to. If it's never to come out that Mike's dead it never will. And why should the Irish people be

after giving the Government the satisfaction of knowing they killed him? But it's a wonderful little island, Ireland is! You never saw the like."

"No, I never really did," I said with all earnestness.

"And you never will."

I watched the door close behind her. Of course, Michael Collins was not dead. Then what did Sinn Fein mean by throwing dust in the eyes of the public through the mouths of the priests?

The door opened and Mrs. O'Grady returned with a duster.

"There's another thing," she began. "We don't know all that is going on, nor half. Things will be worse before they're better. God help us, they're bad enough now. And the mistress is mad, too, she wants the house noticed. Sure, she'll get all the notice she wants, and more." She became gloomy.

"What do you mean?"

"What I can't say. And there's men always after watching this house. There's Black-and-Tans in civies in the road this very minute."

"How do you know they're Black-and-Tans?"

"Polly Pluck knows them all. She lives just behind Beggars Bush Barracks. There are spies everywhere, and you never know who you're talking to."

"That's quite true. You be very careful, Mrs. O'Grady."

"Me? The Irish are born careful. They need

to be. The best known saying round these parts is never trust the heels of a horse, the horns of a bull, or the smile of an Englishman. And it's true." She came near, flourishing her duster and peering at me. "It's been on me mind to tell you, for I sez to Polly Pluck, the lady what has the drawing-room flat has more brains than the lot of us put together, and it's she will know what to do."

"Well," I said, "go on, Mrs. O'Grady."

She shuffled. "Bedad, I may keep me thoughts to meself, as O'Grady was after saying only last night. The fewest knows, the least harm, sez he, and it's himself is mostly always right."

"Something Mrs. Slaney has been doing, I suppose?"

She tiptoed to the door, looked out, shut it carefully and then came back to me, looking as mysterious as an ostrich which is about to bury its head in the sand.

"No, I don't trust the mistress that far," she declared, waving her arm. "But it's meself that I keep me thoughts to. She's up to something, and if you'd seen what I've seen in this very house, you'd know it too. And it's Polly Pluck who knows it. She's a smart little girl, is Polly; but I don't trust her. Blowing hot first and then cold, and first this way and then that, walking out one week with a Black-and-Tan and the next with a Shinner. If you can't be for one side, I sez, for land's sake be for the other, and don't go chopping

and changing like a cock with no head. But do you think she'll listen. Not she."

"Why do you stay here, Mrs. O'Grady, if it's so dangerous?"

"It suits me," she declared. "I could leave to-morrow and get a place where you'd be proud to eat your dinner off the floors, and a kitchen, mind you, that I wouldn't mind living me life in; but this suits me."

"I think you are very stupid to stay."

"I do be, mum, I do be. But it suits me. I've had me fortunes too."

"Really?"

"Yes, mum. Real fortunes. The first I spent going to Killarney. I stayed at the best hotel. Och, and a grand evening dress and all to me back. I had peaches, not sixpenny peaches, but peaches worth four or five shillings, and my sister, who hasn't spent a penny of hers yet, called me a fool. I may be a fool, and she may feel a lady with her money in the bank; but she'll never feel as I did in that evening dress."

"What happened to the other fortune?"

"I bought a burying ground with it. My father had a burying ground, but there was only room for one more in it, so me brother having the name, we thought he should have it. I was afraid O'Grady would put me anywhere, and I wouldn't like that. I'm come from Brian Boru, though you wouldn't think it to look at me now, but there was a time when I was as particular as yourself about

me boots and gloves." She sighed. "Well, I can rest easy, and I have my grave, and room in it for O'Grady, too, though I've seen as much of him as I want in life, and that's the truth."

Himself came into the room brisk for a walk.

"Well, Mrs. O'Grady," he said cheerfully, "so O'Grady was ambushed last night?"

"Indeed, and he was, sir." Mrs. O'Grady stopped as she spoke, and tweaked a chair cover straight. "It shook him."

"Terrible times, Mrs. O'Grady."

"They do be terrible times. Sure, but we're used to terrible times in Ireland. It was the same when I was a girl, and before I was a girl. Why, my grandfather was murdered out there on the Wicklow Hills. There was terrible times then. It's me mother I've heard tell of them over and over again. Never trust the English, she said, and I never have, no, not the length of me arm, nor my children either. Ah, well you don't have to go streeling the streets for news in Ireland."

There was a tap at the door, which made us all jump, and the next minute Mrs. Slaney bustled into the room.

"Mrs. O'Grady, I've called you three times, what are you doing?"

"I'm after taking the orders for dinner."

"You won't mind if I take Mrs. O'Grady away, I'm sure," she said. "You're going out, I see. Are you going near the Electric Light Company's offices? It would save me a trip. No? Grafton

Street ? Now, I wonder if you would buy me a sixpenny saucepan at Woolworth's. Mrs. O'Grady burnt my little cocoa saucepan last night."

She hurried from the room, Mrs. O'Grady going before her.

"Well," said Himself, "I thought you were going to refuse any more errands ?"

"She didn't give me time to answer."

Mrs. Slaney bustled into the room again.

"Excuse me coming in again. Father Murphy is coming to-night. He has just come back from Cork, and has met a priest who came from the place where Father Griffin was murdered. I have asked him to meet a woman who is interested in the Peace with Ireland League. I'd like you to come to-night, too, you might find it interesting. The Peace with Ireland League is going to do wonderful work. Lady Bange brought out a splendid pamphlet. Just plain facts; but the Government suppressed it. That's freedom and justice. That's England's way of protecting small nations. Monstrous ! Now, I'll not keep you any longer. You won't forget the saucepan ?"

She trotted out of the room.

CHAPTER XX

TO DUBLIN CASTLE

MRS. O'GRADY'S forebodings were to prove themselves only too true. The fatal evening came at the end of an April day when the Crown Forces made a great haul of propaganda in Molesworth Street. Rumour had it they had penetrated into a basement and found there the temporary offices of the *Irish Bulletin*, the official organ of Sinn Fein. Six typewriters and two tons of literature to do with propaganda were borne off in triumph to the Castle. Rumour also had it that Darrel Figgis had incriminated himself to his beard. A neighbour received word over the telephone that Figgis's flat had been raided, his typewriter smashed, the bindings of some of his books destroyed. Figgis had gone on the run, and warning came to us to get anything seditious out of the house, as it was likely to be raided for him at any time. By five in the evening Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald had got all her stuff away, a man carrying it off in a sack through the streets.

There was more of winter than spring these

days, as one knew as soon as it got dark. We were sitting after dinner as close up to the fire as we could get when at our sitting-room door came the knock which we knew better than Poe ever knew the knock of his raven.

"Come in," I said, and stood bowing by the sofa.

The door opened, and Mrs. Slaney entered. "I thought you might like this morning's paper," she said, smiling from one to the other of us.

She joined us on the sofa, and took one of my cigarettes. Silence reigned until she had had a puff or two, and then she broke it.

"It is perfectly monstrous what those brutes did this morning to Mr. Figgis. They have raided his flat four times to-day. They wantonly destroyed his typewriter, and I hear they have damaged the backs of a number of his books. He has such a choice library. A most cultured, refined man."

"I suppose they smashed his typewriter because he used it for seditious work, and they probably pulled the backs off his books to see if he had anything hidden behind. They often get information that way," I suggested.

"Nonsense, they take a pleasure in wanton destruction."

"What's that?"

There came into the street the noise of powerful engines. In two or three seconds the sound had risen to a loudness which filled every empty space. We threw up our heads, and Mrs. Slaney flushed.

I went to the window, drew the blind aside, and peered into the dark. Under the window there were blinding shafts of light from acetylene lamps, and pitch dark everywhere else. Two lorries had drawn up to the door, and men were leaping out.

"They've come again," Mrs. Slaney exclaimed, her hand on her heart. "They're after Mr. Figgis."

There were two lorries, one a bomb-proof affair like a chicken coop, and the other unlike a chicken coop. Before Mrs. Slaney had stopped there came a thunderous knock on the door.

I held the door open for her, and she bustled out of the room and down the stairs. For a moment her voice dominated everything in the hall, and then it was lost in the noise of many men tramping into the hall and bounding up the ancient stairs. I made a dive for my MS.

"They'll be coming in here," I said. "It'll be a beastly nuisance if they disarrange things. I wouldn't be surprised if they found Figgis upstairs, only he'd be a fool to come."

I had got the MS. in a bundle when the door was thrown open, and men covered with guns poured in. This was only a tributary of the main river, which continued to flow into the upper reaches of the house.

"What's your name?"

I gave my name. "This lady is my wife."

"Where's Figgis?"

"Haven't seen him for months."

“ He was here last night.”

“ Was he ? ”

“ Are you a friend of Michael Collins ? ”

“ Haven’t met him yet.”

Suddenly the tributary left off questioning and joined the main stream, in which, through the open door, I caught sight of several acquaintances who had visited the house on other occasions. We finished tidying the valuable things, so that if the rooms were searched we could show what was there. Then a terrible man in khaki, the man in khaki who was always in charge of the job, climbed the stairs. He looked redder, fiercer, and more morose than ever. He stalked in and looked us up and down.

“ What’s your name ? ”

I gave my name. “ This is my wife.”

“ Are you Irish ? ”

“ No.”

“ What are you doing in Ireland ? ”

“ We came over on business.”

“ What business ? ”

“ I had a scheme of child adoption I hoped to get going,” said my wife.

“ Where is it ? ” he demanded, as if we would pull it out of our pockets.

“ It was a frail plant,” I answered, “ and is now no more. First the Catholics came, and said to me, will you please be giving up that work for its after converting our children to Protestantism you are. Then the Protestants came and said they to me, will you be after giving that up, please, for

it's converting our children to Rome you have in mind. The plant was frail and it died."

"Why didn't you go home?"

"We stopped to write a book."

He grunted and said, "What do you write?"

I showed him the MS. on the table. "This is some of our stuff."

He came across and took up some of it, and looked through it as if he thought very little of it. He flopped it down on the table and stalked out on to the landing, and called down the stairs in a great voice—

"Hi, two more of you fellows come up here. There seems to be the only man in the house in this room, and not a damn one of you looking after him."

A good-looking, refined and most dapper little man answered this request. He came into the room and, finding a woman there, seemed considerably embarrassed. He began a perfunctory search of our belongings; but when the man in khaki went to the top of the house, he looked behind a picture or two and sank into a chair.

The door had been shut. A depressing silence fell. The little man in the chair was the neatest Auxiliary I ever saw, and in spite of the rake of his Balmoral bonnet might have appeared in any drawing-room. By his voice he was quite well bred.

"I'm fed up with this job," he announced, breaking the strained silence, and giving my wife the benefit of most of his attention, "but I've had

no say in it. I'm a major in the Regular Army in India and came home on leave, and then they bunged me over here, and made me join up in the Auxiliaries. I sent for my wife then, and we were among the people called on by the Shinnars on the November Sunday. I was out, and they insulted and intimidated my wife, who was going to have a child. She has been semi-paralysed since, and I'm waiting to do in one or two Shinnars before returning home."

"There's a catch in that story somewhere," I thought, and the result of my scepticism was that we all sank into another silence, hearing only the movement of many people trampling overhead. There seemed a great deal of talking below, and occasionally the high, quick voice of Mrs. Fitzgerald. I knew they would find it a case of Mother Hubbard with her, unless some brilliant searcher of seditious papers had discovered the secret of the infant Fergus. But let that secret rest !

Presently the trampling seemed to be getting louder, and coming down from the top of the house. Was Mrs. Slaney coming down in chains ? The door was thrown open, it was the habit of these people to throw a door wide open so that nobody could shoot from behind it, and in stalked our morose acquaintance in khaki. Behind him I saw two men staggering downstairs with a portmanteau, and thought, "Begad, they've captured something." But there was no Mrs. Slaney in chains.

Our friend stuck his legs apart, balanced on

them, and said, after looking round the room, " You had better put a coat on. It's a cold night."

This made me look up. " Eh ? " I said.

" You're coming with us," he answered.

" Coming with you ? "

" We've found ammunition in the house," he announced, " and we're taking every man in the house."

" Ammunition ? "

" Oh yes, you know nothing about it, of course. It was in Mrs. Slaney's bedroom."

" But I'm a married man," I expostulated. " How am I likely to know what's in Mrs. Slaney's bedroom ? "

A brief three-handed conversation, in which my wife joined, took place, and at the end of it I submitted to fate, and wrapped myself in my oldest overcoat. The last of the party had tramped down the stairs. The raid was over.

Mrs. Slaney came in looking double her size with indignation.

" You've got me into trouble now, Mrs. Slaney," I said, or something to that effect. " They've found your ammunition, and they're taking me to the Castle."

" Monstrous ! " she exclaimed. " Iniquitous ! Just a few war trophies." She turned on our morose friend. " I swear to you I did not know what those things were."

" You mean to tell me you don't know bullets ? "

" No."

He turned away from her and grunted at me, "Come along." Mrs. Slaney marched out of the room.

Finishing my toilet with a scarf, I followed in the descent, the man in khaki, our dapper guard, and my wife making up the rear. The front door was open, and all the cold and dark in the world were coming in through it. The black of outside was blacker because of the lorry lights, and the said lorries were now cranked up and humming to be off. Men were climbing into them by the back.

The hall had emptied of raiders. At the bottom of the stairs we found Mrs. Fitzgerald, Mrs. Slaney, and a tearful Mrs. O'Grady standing in a circle like chickens come round a trough, and in the middle of them, miserable as a whippet in the wind, O'Grady in a bowler and a threadbare overcoat. They had plunged into the bowels of the house and captured him. There was no check in the tide and I seemed to be passing through the hall and down the steps like a boat passing an island. There were upraised women's voices. Mrs. Fitzgerald was quite collected and giving advice. My wife was ordering me to wrap up. Mrs. O'Grady was calling upon the saints to help her poor man.

Mrs. Slaney had the last word. "Iniquitous!" she exclaimed in my ear, as I was looking for the top step. "But now you will be able to see for yourself what our splendid young men are experiencing every day."

As I have said there were two lorries, one like

a chicken coop and the other unlike a chicken coop. We were told to get into the chicken coop. This I at least was most agreeable to do, as I had no desire to be a target of homeless Sinn Feiners. Then with a flourish we were away under the eyes of many interested people hanging from upper windows. We raced through the deserted streets. It had been raining, and the roads shone wherever the lamps fell upon them.

We were the second car. There seemed in our lorry two sorts of seats, a bad sort, and a worse sort, wooden planks resting on boxes, and rolls of wire. We sat, about a dozen all told, on these things, and except for O'Grady and myself, every man had a rifle and about three guns apiece. At the end of a minute we were about to fly down Grafton Street, when the front car came to a halt and began to run round. This time it took the lead down Kildare Street, and we after it, and we all came to a stop this side of the ruined Maples Hotel, at No 29, which was Darrel Figgis's flat.

"They're after him," I thought. "They are very optimistic people."

Figgis's flat was under the roof, and there was no light burning. Half the Auxiliaries left the lorries, filed up the steps, and a great banging began at the door. The sound echoed down the streets. Then a light appeared at the top of the house, the window opened, and a woman in a nightgown leaned out. I thought it was Mrs. Figgis; but it turned out to be Mrs. Coneray, president of the

Woman's Franchise League. The knocking never ceased, the figure above disappeared, and presently the door opened, and the Auxiliaries were swallowed up in the dark of the passage.

There followed a long wait in the cold.

Suddenly a man at my side leapt round like a cat spotting a mouse. Everybody waked up. "A man ran across the road just then," he called out. "At the mouth of Molesworth Street. I swear he did."

One or two Auxiliaries mooched backwards and forwards across the road with their rifles under their arms. One of these, with his rifle at the ready, went as far as the corner of Molesworth Street; but he came back saying there was nothing to see. There was another wait, which was shortened by a small chatty individual who came up to our lorry and began to talk to me through the wire netting. He chatted like an old acquaintance.

"We took Desmond Fitzgerald," he said, in the pleasantest fashion. "A bad house that."

"Is it?" I answered.

"Figgis was there lately," he went on.

"So I am told. I never saw him."

"Why are you there?"

"I don't appear to be there just now."

"Why don't you move?"

"No need to. You've done it for me."

The door opened, and the Auxiliaries came filing out. Never a word was said. They climbed into the lorries, and we began to tear round the

corners at the previous breakneck speed. Soon we were racing past Trinity and the Bank of Ireland. In the middle of College Green an armoured car was at work with a searchlight, turning the beam slowly across the face of Trinity, lighting up the windows one after another. Not a fly could have crawled unnoticed upon that surface. We took no notice of them, nor they of us. For a minute we were racing along Dame Street, and then with a sweep we were turning in to the Castle Gate, the great doors were pulled apart, and we were at a standstill within the Castle Yard.

CHAPTER XXI

INSIDE THE CASTLE

IN a few seconds the lorries were empty and everybody was disappearing into the dark. A voice had cried out, "Come along, boys, the bar's open for another half-hour."

Not everybody succumbed to the magic of those words, for O'Grady and I were led away to the left to a place which must have been a guardroom. The spell of the army was upon everything. There were endless unbrushed passages as a start, and everybody we came upon seemed to come to life suddenly, and to wave us on to somebody else.

In the guardroom we were delivered over to new people.

The room was of no special size, shape or description, and had only one attraction, which was a fire. The windows were sandbagged. There was a table at which a strenuous Auxiliary sat writing; two other Auxiliaries nodded over the fire; and to one side of the room were three baths, and in each bath slumbered an Auxiliary. On some biscuits, not the edible kind, on the floor slept two young prisoners. The strenuous Auxiliary

reluctantly put down his pen. The two men nodding at the fire watched out of an eye each.

As a start we were prodded all over for arms and seditious documents, and I was told to give up my pocket-book.

"Any money in it?" demanded the strenuous Auxiliary, as I was passing it over.

"Thirty bob, I think," I answered.

"Well, count it and see," he ordered, "or you'll say we pinched it."

I counted it and handed him the pocket-book, which he went through page by page, asking me to explain every likely-looking sentence. Finally he slapped it back at me on the table. He waved a hand at some dirty biscuits and dirtier blankets, which were stacked in a corner.

"You can take some of those," he said, "and doss on the floor."

I nodded to show I was grateful for the favour, and O'Grady and I explored these biscuits. I wondered if O'Grady had ever been in as bad straits before. I had had to put up with all sorts of beds in my life, beds on the bare earth, beds on the rolling sea, most bitter barren beds; but they had not taught me to be friendly to the colour of these blankets. However, O'Grady seemed to find what he wanted, took off his boots, put his hard hat on top of them, rolled up just as he had been standing, and was asleep before I had made a first choice. Before long the men nodding by the fire came across.

“The old un’s got down to it quickly,” one of them said with admiration. “The old dog for the hard road.”

“You can doss by the fire there,” the other one said to me, jerking his hand to a place by the side of the fire.

I took him at his word and emigrated with two blankets which seemed to have known fewer generations of Sinn Feiners than any of the others. I grew more friendly with them as gradually I became warm and sleepy.

But I never quite fell asleep, and though it was late when I lay down, what remained of the night was ages long.

It was a very restless place. People came in and out, cheery people, people in evening dress who had dined well, people in uniform who seemed to have nothing to do and no desire for bed. Now one Auxiliary arose out of his bath like Lazarus come out of his tomb; now a second sprang up like a jack-in-the-box and the first sank back again. All the while the strenuous Auxiliary continued to write, and to this day I believe he was at work upon his reminiscences. Finally, an Auxiliary, who had arisen from his bath and not gone back again, started an argument with the strenuous Auxiliary about who burned Cork. He was serious and anxious to get at the truth. They produced paper and worked at the answer with a will.

The Auxiliary from the bath proved there were only a small number of his fraternity in Cork at

the time, and that most of them, including himself, were in hospital having pieces of bomb taken out of them. He said there were over four thousand soldiers in Cork, and God knew how many Shinners, and it was either the military or the I.R.A. ; but the Auxiliaries were blameless. This argument lasted a very long time, and caused books to be tossed about, and feet to be shuffled, and other things to happen uncondueive to sleep, and it must have worn out the Auxiliary from the bath, for at the end of it he sank into his bath again like a corpse sinking into a grave. The strenuous Auxiliary returned to his writing.

The Auxiliaries who lived in the baths were thin Auxiliaries ; there was a stout Auxiliary dozing on a chair on the farther side of the fire. He was middle-aged, and had something of the look of a father of a family ; but there was never a moment when he was not picturesque, with his rifle at his hand and his Balmoral bonnet on his head.

Whatever might be one's feelings towards these men, there was no denying they were a fine type—active, young, for the most part in splendid physical condition, and most romantically dressed. I kept on dozing and coming to again, coming to and dozing, for I would suddenly be aware of everything—of the room full of miscellaneous and dreary things, of the sandbagged window with the Lewis gun in position, of the men nodding on their arms, of the two young prisoners rolled up in one blanket, of O'Grady dreaming of Mrs. Slaney's basement, and

of the kindly fire next door to me leaping up the chimney—and then all would pass away again.

About breakfast time everybody awakened. I sat up blinking with my tongue sticking to the roof of my mouth, O'Grady felt himself all over and put on his boots, the youthful prisoners came to, and the Auxiliaries emerged from their baths and stayed out.

Breakfast came in—ham and eggs in a pile, and pyramids of bread. These encouraging things began to disappear down the throats of the Auxiliaries ; but half-way through the feast somebody heartened us a little by announcing we would get something later on. And in time we found ourselves sitting down to ham and immense wedges of bread and butter. While we ate somebody cleaned the Lewis gun, pointing the muzzle at the pit of my stomach. The last wedge of ham was eaten, and that was the end of whatever good time O'Grady and I had at the Castle.

We were still looking at our empty plates when an escort turned up, and O'Grady and I began a new journey, down winding passages where the plaster was peeling off walls and roof. We seemed to be going on and on into the bowels of the Castle ; but at last came round a sudden corner into a small chamber given over to a military guard.

The soldiers looked at us resentfully, as if they thought us a disturbing influence ; but the sergeant of the guard came forward, shuffled some dreary papers, produced a bad pen, which he straightened

upon the wooden table, found some worse ink, and proceeded to give a receipt for us. After that transaction I gathered we no longer belonged to the police; but our new possessors seemed to distrust their possessions until we had proved beyond a doubt that we were our fathers' sons. This I found a more difficult thing to do than it sounds, and it took several sheets of official paper. These papers were slapped on top of a pile of others, and we were told to go through an ancient wooden door, past a sentry with fixed bayonet. Through the door we went into the most dismal place I have seen in my life.

Verily we had fallen from the frying-pan into the fire.

The room was no size at all, with one long high window boarded up to the top so that little light got in and the gas had to burn all day. There was a good fire leaping in the grate; but the air was stale and thick, and hazy with tobacco smoke. There was nothing but the names of past prisoners written in pencil on the walls from which the plaster was falling, and in a corner some blankets filthier than those we had left behind us. Three or four men sat on the ground round the fire talking in whispers.

They looked up as we stood just inside the door discovering what had happened to us, and beckoned us to the fire. We joined the sad circle.

"Have you got in here, too?" said a dark fellow like a Spaniard.

"It looks like it," I answered, gaping at the desolate prospect.

"What was the trouble?"

"They found some ammunition under somebody else's bed and said it was mine."

My listener looked respectful. "Ammunition! That's bad," he said.

Everybody was smoking. The smoke curled up and made the thick air thicker. O'Grady pulled a pipe out of some part of him, and I found a cigarette.

"How long are we going to be here?" I said.

"Until you go up for interrogation."

"When's that?"

"Sure and it's the same day sometimes, or it's two days or three days."

"And what happens after that?"

"Indade, and if you can explain things you can go. And if you can't it's to Ballykinler Internment Camp you go."

"What's that like?"

"Sure, and I hear tell it's not bad in summer. Plenty of sports and games, and a chap gets a rest; but it's no place at all at all in winter, but wind and rain."

Somebody else joined in the talk.

"They got me on Monday. They had me up for interrogation two days ago and put me back. They put you back to find out more about you. One of them says to the other, reading it off a paper, this man's a lieutenant in the I.R.A. Their intelligence men are very good."

The man like a Spaniard spoke. "When they got hold of me one man said to the other, 'Take care of this fellow, we want him. He's a prominent Sinn Feiner.' "

I found everybody rather inclined to hint at his value as a Republican ; but I had no intention of following the good example when I went up for interrogation. I found in these people the trait common to all men who come together in difficulties. They made a great show of cheerfulness and good humour, finding a joke in everything and laughing at nothing.

At long intervals a new prisoner came through the door, and eventually the number had grown to thirteen. The arrival of a new companion always wakened us up for a little, and then the spell of the place fell on us again. The atmosphere was too devastating to think in, to read in ; we passed the time on our backs, pacing up and down in twos or singly, now and then wearily playing cards and sleeping. And everybody who was not asleep smoked until the air was like a fog.

Lunch time came. A couple of us went away under escort and returned with two tin dishes laden with food. There was food and to spare, and good food too ; but strange are the ways of Dublin Castle, and there was nothing to eat it off or with. Among thirteen people there were three or four plates, a couple of knives, a couple of forks and a spoon. We had to eat in turn. I saw that my turn never came. If you keep a bird in a cage you

should see that the cage is clean. These people, who were of inferior social position, two were railway porters, may not have been squeamish; but the conditions were unnecessary, and gave the Sinn Féin party a genuine handle for their propaganda. There was a gallon of tea for us, and not one cup, and an apologetic sergeant could only produce five jam jars of different sizes. Yet countless prisoners have lain in Dublin Castle.

We asked for coal, we got coal, and the place was never chilly. "Eat as much as you want," the sergeant said, "but don't get more than you can eat or there'll be trouble about it." The contrast was extreme between the accommodation provided and the readiness of our guards to make us comfortable. I found no man who was not accommodating. One had only to knock on the door and the guard opened it to grant any little request he could, such as purchasing cigarettes or a pack of cards. When night came along one soldier gave up his blankets to us because we had not enough to go round.

The man like a Spaniard had seen the inside of many prisons.

"A man is better off when it's their minds they have made up what they're going to do with him," he said. "Sure, once a man's sentenced conditions are better. It's these places where they grab chaps and keep them for interrogation that are worst."

At night, when we rolled up in our blankets, we covered the whole floor. I was to get an intimate

glance into Catholic life. As each man finished taking off his boots and such clothes as he thought fit, he knelt upon his blankets in the most natural way in the world and said his prayers. Nobody seemed to think there was anything strange in this behaviour ; but it was surprising to a stranger, and proved how intimate a part of a Catholic's life his religion is. The fire was made up last thing to last through the night.

For three days thirteen of us stayed in an atmosphere which was foul in the beginning and staling all the time.

The third day we were told to get ready for exercise, and were taken under escort to a back yard of the Castle where we wandered wearily up and down, while female servants looked down on us disdainfully from upper stories. In the middle of our wanderings somebody arrived with a chair, and a sprightly young man, waving a diminutive camera on very long legs, so that it looked like some breed of spider, invited us to take the chair in turn and be photographed. At the same time another gentleman with a waxed moustache and a very penetrating eye jotted down his personal reflections upon our looks. This was for the Castle archives. Tears came into the eyes of poor old O'Grady when he had to suffer the indignity of the chair ; but I disguised myself behind a three days' growth of beard and remained unashamed. After the photography we were headed back to our cell, to staleness, to boredom and to dreary contemplation.

The end of my adventure came as suddenly as the beginning. We were exercising next day. A sergeant of Military Police tapped me on the shoulder and said, "This way." I started at his side and we crossed the Upper Castle Yard, and then the Lower Castle Yard, and finally we came to the main gate. He gave a flourish of his hand and said, "There you are. You are free."

Not to be outdone, I also waved my hand. "I'm to walk out there?"

"You're free."

"What about the other fellow, the old man?"

"I don't know anything about him. He'll be out in a few minutes."

"But I've not got my gear. I must go back and get it."

He looked scandalised. "You can't. You're free. You can't be in the Castle without a permit. You must go. You have no right here. You must go. The other fellow will bring your bag."

"I didn't want to come, and you brought me here. Now you want me to go, and I don't want to go—without the old man and my gear."

"You are free, and you can't be in the Castle without a permit." He was shocked to the root of his being.

I departed.

CHAPTER XXII

LOST : A HUSBAND

WE stood shivering on the steps, and watched Himself and O'Grady climb into one of the lorries. Himself was wrapped up well enough ; but I had a pang at the sight of O'Grady, who was elderly and had on a threadbare overcoat and scarf.

Mrs. Slaney denounced the British Government until the last sounds of the wheels had died away. I listened dazed. A plait of Mrs. O'Grady's hair hung down her back. The spell was broken by Mrs. Slaney retreating upstairs ; but with a bound Mrs. O'Grady outstripped her, and towered above her with her hands raised over her head.

"God forgive you for a wicked old woman ! God forgive you, for I never will. You're a wicked, wicked woman, Mrs. Slaney. Do you hear me ?"

"Hush, Mrs. O'Grady !" Mrs. Fitzgerald urged. "Hush. You'll say something you'll be sorry for later. Mrs. O'Grady, be quiet."

"Be quiet ! I cannot with himself all perishing of the cold. And the cough on his chest something awful. It's dead he'll be before he reaches the Castle. You wicked, wicked woman, you were

after knowing those bullets were there." Her voice rose and cracked, and she became inarticulate.

"Now, Mrs. O'Grady, pull yourself together," ordered Mrs. Slaney, sharply. "Pull yourself together at once. You're hysterical. O'Grady will come out of this all right, he'll come to no harm. Indeed, it will be good for them both to experience what hundreds of our splendid young men are suffering every day. Come upstairs and I'll give you a little wine. Come up all of you. It's things like this, trials, that bring us close together. Mrs. Fitzgerald will tell you that. It is trials that have united Ireland."

Mrs. O'Grady mouthed words that never came. We could only catch an occasional croak of "wicked old woman."

"We'd better go along, too," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, "for Mrs. O'Grady's sake. We little thought when we watched Desmond drive away that night that the next person would be your husband."

"No, and I don't quite know what to do about it, or who to go to."

"You'll go to the Castle the first thing in the morning. And if you can't do any good, I should suggest finding a Unionist solicitor. I can only send you to Sinn Feiners, and they have all been mixed up in court-martial cases, which make them useless as far as the Castle is concerned. If you could get a Unionist for your husband it would be

better. You must do everything quickly. Ammunition is a serious charge."

We had reached Mrs. Slaney's quarters. They were upside down.

"Look at this!" she exclaimed. "Monstrous! They have no respect for sex or age. They thought they would terrify me; but I'm not afraid, not if the whole British Army were to come. I never flinched once, and the man in charge was abominably rude. I showed them that an Irish woman, and an elderly and helpless one at that, could face them. I never flinched."

Mrs. O'Grady had recovered her voice.

"It's black trouble you've brought on us all, and it's worse you'll bring. Leaving bullets under your bed where little girls can find them."

"What do you mean?"

Mrs. O'Grady shook.

"You can't pretend that you didn't know those bullets were there, not to me, mum. Little Polly Pluck told me on them weeks ago, and it's little sleep either O'Grady or me has had ever since."

My mind leaped back to the day Mrs. O'Grady had talked so mysteriously.

"Do you mean to say that you kept such stuff there? Why didn't you send it to the proper quarters?" demanded Mrs. Fitzgerald. "If you'd told me, I could have had it all taken away by the right people."

"A few war trophies!" Mrs. Slaney exclaimed.

"A few simple war trophies of no interest to anybody."

"The Auxiliaries thought them interesting," I retorted bitterly.

"Yes, mum," chorused Mrs. O'Grady.

"How did I know what they were? Would I have kept them if I did? My son sent his portmanteau home from France and these were a few trophies. I didn't know they were there. I didn't know what they were. I told the officer in charge so. 'Are those bullets?' I asked him, and you see he believed me."

"Do you mean to tell me," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, "that a woman of your age doesn't know a bullet when she sees it?"

"I don't believe you, mum," declared Mrs. O'Grady. "Not if you was to go down on your knees, and what's more, those never came home from France, for I went through everything in your room at Christmas time meself, and that box, too, and they were never there then. You'll remember, I was looking for your shoes, which you had with you all the time."

"I declare I didn't know what they were. Dumdum, he called them. There were some little ones, too, loose, or he said there were."

"Have you anything else?" I asked.

She shuffled, but we had got her in hand.

"Well, they didn't find everything. I told my beads all the time, and they didn't pull out the shutters. I had some things there. And they

must have tripped over a revolver a dozen times. By the goodness of God, they didn't find everything."

"You'll get rid of all those things at once, Mrs. Slaney," I said. "You'll burn the papers and get rid of the revolver and whatever else you have. They'll come back, you may be certain of that."

"You must get rid of them, Mrs. Slaney," said Mrs. Fitzgerald, taking up the chorus. "Our people haven't authorised you to keep them. It's disgraceful."

Mrs. Slaney sought to pour oil upon troubled waters. "I'll make you tea," she suggested. "We'll all feel better then." She hurried out of the room to make tea.

"She's an astonishing woman," I said bitterly.

Mrs. Fitzgerald looked thoughtful. "She said something about gelignite. You'd better see that she gets rid of that."

"Gelignite !" I exclaimed.

"If they raid again and find gelignite it will be serious."

"I don't feel I can battle with her to-night," I said. "I'll see her about it to-morrow."

"There's a uniform and a rifle in this very room, too, under the books in that cupboard !" said Mrs. O'Grady. "She's got stuff stowed away everywhere, and nobody knows it better than myself."

"But why has she got it ?" I demanded, "unless the I.R.A. leave it here."

Mrs. Slaney came in briskly with the tea.

"The I.R.A. don't leave stuff with people they

can't trust absolutely," declared Mrs. Fitzgerald. "I can assure you that they wouldn't leave it here. Mrs. Slaney, you really must get rid of everything. It will be fatal if anything more is found. Thank goodness, they didn't search the house the night they took Desmond. Nothing would have made them believe that it wasn't his."

Mrs. Slaney was ruffled.

"I call the attitude of you all most extraordinary," she retorted. "You're making a great deal out of a very little. We'll have some tea. It will do us all good."

She became busy at the tea-tray.

"I'll tackle her in the morning about it," I said, getting up. "I'll see her now about wiring to her son as soon as the office opens. He must claim the stuff."

"Of course, he'll claim it," Mrs. Fitzgerald agreed. "He'll catch the first boat across tomorrow, and wire ahead to the Castle."

"You're not going," said Mrs. Slaney, as I turned to her. "Have some tea first, it will pull you together. I'm quite proud of my household. You all behaved very well. No Black-and-Tan can boast that he terrorised us." She beamed on me. "It's a pity about O'Grady and your husband, of course; but it might have been much worse."

"I've got to straighten up our flat. I must go," I said. "I want to be at the post-office as soon as it opens. Will you write out a wire for your son to-night, and I'll send it off."

"A wire to my son? We can't bring my son into it."

"Mrs. Slaney, what do you mean?" Mrs. Fitzgerald exclaimed. "You say the stuff is your son's. Of course he must claim it."

"Oh, I know you're thinking of your husband," Mrs. Slaney said to me, "and I'm thinking of my son. I can't bring him into it."

"Mrs. Slaney, my husband and O'Grady are in prison, do you understand that, and they are charged with a serious offence. I insist on the address."

"I told the officer I was willing to go instead of them. But he laughed. And now you want to bring my son into it."

"Your son's in the army. It's quite easy for him; and if it isn't, it's the least he can do. After all, the stuff isn't mine! I expect you to get rid of everything you have in the house, too."

"I'll do anything, anything. I'm a broken woman. I'll write the wire in the morning. I promise I will."

"Very well. Good night. I'm going to bed."

I was up first thing in the morning; but Mrs. O'Grady was up before me. She looked as if she had not had a wink of sleep.

"I'm after getting your breakfast now," she said to me. "I'll send Polly up with it. Sure, I thought I heard them coming a hundred times, and you're looking washed out yourself, mum."

Ten minutes later Polly clattered up with an ill-fried egg upon an ill-warmed plate. She expressed excitement in every movement. Her eyes snapped as she put down the plate in front of me.

"Polly," I said, "I want you to go up to Mrs. Slaney. Take this pencil and paper and ask her to write out a wire to her son. I'm ready to go as soon as you come back."

I had scarcely poured out my tea before Mrs. O'Grady came back in place of Polly.

"The mistress says she'll not give you the address. The meanness of her. 'I didn't know the bullets were there,' sez she to me, 'and when they showed them to me I didn't know what they were.' 'I don't believe you, mum,' sez I. 'Not a wink have I slept this night,' sez she. 'I was just after settling down when you disturbed me. No one thinks of me. You can just take that pencil back,' sez she."

I got up. "Thanks, Mrs. O'Grady, I'll tackle her myself. I'm going to get that address."

Mrs. Slaney called "Come in" to my knock. She had prepared a line of defence.

"I've been awake thinking of you all night," she said. "I haven't closed my eyes. I know it's a terrible thing for you; but I don't think we should wire to my son. It can do no good. I'll just go along this morning and see one or two men I know. Men with wise heads, who will advise us well."

"What objection have you to wiring to your son? I am sure your son would hate to know his bullets had got two men into difficulties."

"My son is so highly strung. He was a shell-shock case, and he's never been the same."

"My husband was worse than a shell-shock case."

"If it was a question of that, I would say nothing ; but my son has a sprained ankle."

"A sprained ankle ! "

"They're not at all sure that he hasn't seriously hurt his foot. They may have to operate. They may have to do it to-day."

"And if they do he can still send a wire. Mrs. Slaney, time is very precious. I can't leave those two men there without making some effort."

"They were only war trophies." Then to my relief she took the pencil reluctantly. "What do you want me to write ? "

"Simply his address. I'll do the rest."

She put the pencil down.

"Hadn't I better write to my son ? Yes, that would be better. I'll write straight away now, and then I can explain things so much better."

"I'm going to write to your son, Mrs. Slaney, you needn't do that. But the wire's to go too."

She gave in, and ten minutes later I was sending the wire.

Then I went to the Castle.

The Castle yard was full of lorries, there were soldiers and Auxiliaries everywhere, and men in mufti walked busily about, though as far as I could see they had no business.

It is an easy matter to get a husband locked up ;

but, until I faced the Tommies at the Castle gates and stated my case, I did not know what a difficult matter it is to get one unlocked. Ammunition sounds so simple. It sounds so simple to say that it belonged to somebody else, and you had no knowledge of it. But the word ammunition changes the expression on every face in Dublin Castle.

There seemed no one to go to. I was sent from guardroom to guardroom. I sat upon hard forms while weary Tommies dawdled off to mysterious inner rooms with a paper which I had filled up and signed. At last there came one Tommy, brighter than the others, who returned and said briskly, "This way," and I grew hopeful.

This way proved to be across the yard and into another building with other ill-swept corridors, with other stairs which proclaimed that unwiped feet had climbed them for many years. The Tommy left me and disappeared through a door.

I sat beside a small table, and one or two men eyed me. After some time the Tommy emerged.

"Wrong," he said cheerfully. "Fill this up." He pulled another slip of paper out of a box, and, while I wrote on it, argued with one of the lounging men as to which was the best place to take me.

"Room 8," declared one man at last. "He's shifted lately, but I think he's Room 8. Anyway, Room 8 will tell you."

Once more we made our way along dirty passages, and climbed up and down unswept stairs.

"It's Room 11," declared Room 8 to our inquiries. "You'll find what you want there."

"They've been shifting," the Tommy apologised to me. He stopped a man he knew. "Who's the best person to go to?" He jerked his head in my direction.

The man rubbed his chin with his forefinger. He thought for a long time.

"I don't know," he said at last.

"Have people never been here to inquire before?" I asked the Tommy.

"Lots," he replied cheerfully. "Things have been shifted round a bit lately. I was in armoured cars before. Wait here." He disappeared from my sight into Room 11. I propped up a wall and waited.

Presently the door of No. 11 opened cautiously, and a pair of eyes stared at me.

"Come in here," ordered the owner of the eyes mysteriously, as soon as he had made up his mind that I was not dangerous.

It was a medium-sized room filled with photographs. There were photographs all over the walls, all over the table, all over the chairs. The Tommy withdrew.

The people in attendance upon the photographs, both male and female, stared at me curiously.

"Fill this up," said my mysterious acquaintance. He put a form before me in secretive fashion.

"Haven't I filled up enough before?" I asked,

looking sadly at the slips in his hand. I dipped the pen in the ink, and prepared to write again.

The man leaned over my shoulder confidentially. "You've come to sign on as a woman searcher?"

"What?"

"A woman searcher?"

"Good Heavens, no!" I cried. "If you had troubled to read those papers you are holding you wouldn't have thought that. Your people arrested my husband last night because they found ammunition . . ."

The look of horror on his face stopped me. I glanced all round at frozen faces. Everybody seemed to have been turned into stone. At last the spell was broken. My mysterious acquaintance jerked himself to life and pushed me out of the room.

"The wrong department," he hissed. "Good God, you should never have got in here!"

The Tommy slid slowly off the window sill. "All right?" He seemed an old and tried friend.

"The wrong department," I said drearily. "Why, don't you know your way about your old Castle?"

"It's a tricky sort of a place." He scratched his head at the thought of its trickiness.

An officer was crossing the yard. I hurried after him, stopped him, and poured forth my wrongs. He listened attentively, guiding me as he walked by my side with gentle motions of the hand.

"Room 13," he said with a smile, as we stopped outside it. "I think you will find what you want

in here." He knocked on the door and went in, leaving me outside. Presently he came out again.

"Go in. This is right."

"To the last day of my life, I'll never forget your goodness," I murmured.

He nodded and disappeared round a corner.

Room 13 was an agreeable surprise after my dreary journey. Here was comfort; here a fire; here the carpet was swept and fairly new, and the tables were dusted. Over six foot of man rose from behind one of the tables.

"So you've had trouble getting in?" He was polite. "Come over near the fire." He indicated an armchair, and his manner was helpful. "Now what can I do for you?"

"It's about my husband," I began. The fire gave me confidence. Ammunition seemed a milder charge in here. I poured forth my woes. He made no comment until I finished. "Well?" I ended.

"Of course, he is a perfectly innocent man?"

"But he really is. Would you expect my husband to know what was under another woman's bed?"

"I'd make it my business to know in these times," he declared. "Your house hasn't much of a name. Figgis was probably up to no good there. Fitzgerald was arrested there. And now this charge of ammunition. Why should I believe your husband? Of course, I'm not suggesting that he isn't innocent. But, good God, if you'd heard that story as often as I have! Do you know

that Figgis was seen going into that house only two days ago ? ”

I shook my head.

“ It’s true.”

“ If the ammunition was such a crime, why not arrest Mrs. Slaney, and earn the thanks of us all ? ”

“ Ah, there you have me. Look.” He walked over to the window and pointed to a large building opposite. “ Irish Office. Causes us more trouble than all the Shinnners put together. We can’t arrest half the people we would like to because of them. They tie us hand and foot. The public is so sentimental. Women can always get interest roused, and questions asked in Parliament. Yet we know the women are as deeply in it as the men. Oh, we know all that is to be known about them ; but we’ve got to leave them alone.”

“ I see. Then you intend to keep my husband ? ”

“ I don’t know about that. Mrs. Slaney’s son should communicate with us soon, and if he can establish his claim to the stuff, your husband will be released. Do you know any one who would be ready to answer for him ? ”

I mentioned 47’s name, and he became interested. “ He’s away now,” I said, “ or I would have gone to him at once.”

“ He’ll not be back for some weeks,” said the man. “ If he can vouch for your husband, it will be all right.”

"Some weeks ! My poor man will be dead by then."

"Not he. He's very comfortable where he is. You can send him in anything you like. He has others with him, and they're all very happy."

"There's nothing more that I can do ?"

"Nothing at the moment."

"A solicitor can always see him, I understand ?"

"Certainly. Any time that you like." I got up to go. "I haven't been able to give you much satisfaction ; but you'll get him back as soon as Major Slaney claims the stuff." He walked to the door and opened it for me. "If there's anything I can do for you, come along and let me know."

"There's nothing, thank you."

The Tommy had either died or deserted. I found my way back into the Castle yard. As I hesitated there, a man detached himself from a group and came smiling upon me in the warmest fashion.

"Good morning," he cried. "So you came along to look us up ?"

I tried to place him, but the effort was too much for me.

"You don't remember me ?"

"I'm afraid not."

He laughed the heartiest of laughs. "Your memory is short. Why, I arrested your husband last night."

"Did you ? Then perhaps you can tell me how he is ?"

"He's splendid. We're F Company. We take

special care not to manhandle our prisoners. We take a pride in getting them to the Castle in good condition. Shall I see you to the gate ? ”

“ Thanks, I know the way.”

My coldness did not chill him. He smiled pleasantly after me.

I travelled far that day; but the end of it brought no reward to my efforts. Mrs. O’Grady had become dumb, and had resigned herself to the worst. Mrs. Slaney had retreated into the fastness of her bedroom, where I followed her to do battle about the gelignite.

“ You call this gelignite, I suppose,” she said, unearthing a tin and showing it to me.

“ Where did you get it ? ”

“ It’s wonderful for pot plants,” she declared.

“ I got it to make the plants grow.”

She put it away like a squirrel storing a nut.

The following day I went to a solicitor.

He was pessimistic. “ It’s not much of a job going to the Castle ! ” he exclaimed. “ There are Sinn Feiners always watching. I shall be shot as a spy.” But for all that he went. Returning to lunch, I met Mrs. O’Grady in the hall.

“ No news, mum ? ”

“ None.”

“ And her upstairs going about this way and that just as if it wasn’t her fault. ‘ God forgive you, mum,’ I sez, ‘ for I never will.’ She thinks nothing of me, never a word, but it’s ‘ Mrs. O’Grady, have you swept the stairs ? ’ ‘ Mum,’ I sez, ‘ the

stairs can wait with them two away like this.' 'Nonsense, Mrs. O'Grady,' she sez, 'rubbish! Work will pass the time for you, so it will. Nothing like being up and doing, and keeping yourself occupied.'"

"How I wish they'd take her!"

"It'd be a charity, mum; but there's not one of us but would wear ourselves thin to get her out."

"I wonder. Mrs. O'Grady, send up lunch as soon as you can, please. I'm off to see what I can do this afternoon."

"Shall I order something in case they get back for dinner?"

I shook my head. "Time enough when we see them, Mrs. O'Grady."

"It's a drop of gin I'll have ready for my man, God help him, if the life's still in him."

The next day at five o'clock I walked into the solicitor's office. Himself was there. A chastened, saddened Himself. An older, dirtier Himself; but a free man.

The solicitor was laughing. His success had exhilarated him. "Take him home and feed him!" he said.

"Where's O'Grady?"

"He's on the way."

"Go home and tell Mrs. O'Grady, and get a bath."

"You keep out of sight of the Castle now," said the solicitor. "Look me up again. I didn't

hope for much success, I can tell you. I thought it would be a court-martial. When I was at the Castle I got in touch with somebody over the telephone, who said, 'Ask your client if he knows anything of the I.R.A.' "

We departed home.

Mrs. Slaney was in the hall to greet us. She wrung Himself by the hand.

"What an experience!" she exclaimed. "Now you will be able to write about what happens every day to our splendid young Irishmen."

CHAPTER XXIII

LAST WEEKS OF WAR

WE did at last seem to be putting the winter behind, and like divers in a sea, to be coming out of darkness and cold. Spring did seem to be arriving. The sun shone, the days lengthened, and the leaves began to poke out of the barren boughs of the lilacs and the hawthorns across the way. One could not do other than grow cheerful with the carolling birds. And surely the Republican Volunteers lying out on the mountains, and surely the police driving up hill and down hill, found time to do as we other men were doing ?

These Volunteers lying in ambush, drunk with patriotism and hate, must have been aware of the high blue sky, of the bright white clouds ; they must have raised their eyes now and then from the turn of the road round which their prey was to come, to watch the birds wildly wheeling ; they must have felt the strong grass pushing up.

And the police driving, driving, driving, furious and foiled, seeking, seeking, seeking their invisible enemy, above the throb of the engines must have heard a little of the singing in the hedges, through

the reek of petrol must have drawn in a little of the bouquet of the flowers.

With spring came rumours of a change in policy. It went from mouth to mouth that the British Cabinet was debating a definite peace offer, which would prove acceptable to the Republicans, or as an alternative, the making of real war.

Could Britain survive the humiliation of a truce? Yes. Her very might permitted her to take this step. Her strength was so overwhelming, and so plainly had never been exerted to any extent, that she could make an offer of peace without mortal injury to her prestige. There were no doubt Republican Volunteers, men who had never had a taste of real war, the war of heavy rifle fire and shell fire, who believed the Republican Army the equal of the British Army in the open field; but these men could not be many.

The rumour came and went, and came again.

Rumour brought other news besides talk of peace. The return of the sun had laid the bogey of the long winter nights; but winter had left a mark upon a good many people. Rumour said the men on the run were at the end of their tether. The barber to Michael Collins reported that the Minister of Finance jumped out of his skin at any sound. The barber experienced a good deal of difficulty shaving the Minister. Possibly the said Minister used a safety razor; but the whisper was a sign of the times.

“What I notice most about our boys is the way

they have aged," Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald said to me. "Some of them, who were quite young men at the Rising four years ago, walk and talk like middle-aged men."

I asked Mrs. Fitzgerald how the leaders with a price on their heads kept their nerve day after day, and her answer was they had no time to think of danger because of the work to get through. These people slept in a different house most nights of the week; but all arrangements were made for them, and when they laid down to sleep, be it by night or by day, they knew those round them put their safety first of all things. They knew they were the chosen of a nation, which had lifted them out of obscurity in a few brief years, and this must have been a stout prop to their courage. Nevertheless, I have been assured the life told on the stoutest, for in this warfare, carried on below the surface, it was in the most secure moment a man found himself destroyed.

So spring brought rumours of peace, but did not bring peace. Attacks upon the Crown Forces had increased, and though the Republican Volunteers had returned to their old ambushing tactics, having found the open skirmishing too costly, they carried out daring coups now and then, which helped to restore the damage to their reputation caused by their tactics in the cities.

Then one day I met a neighbour who told me her greengrocer, one of the I.R.A., had announced that the six weeks to follow were to be the worst

weeks of the struggle. Lo! anything might happen to anybody at any moment, and the most obscure citizen might find all in an instant that though the age of chivalry might be dead, the age of romance still existed.

One sunny day, when the wind was shaking open the lilacs across the way, a thin stream of smoke curled up into the sky over the river, and the word went round that the Customs House, the most beautiful building in Ireland, was in flames.

I turned my steps that way. The wind was high, and there was little hope for the building. I came in good time to the shabby streets, which have an end upon the quays. The stream of smoke was rolling up, filling all one part of the sky. I judged the building must be in its death throes. At last, through a gap in the streets, I saw the Customs House straight before me on the other side of the river, and on the quays on this side all the world had gathered. When I emerged from my dive into the mean streets, I came against a wedge of several thousand people. They were from all parts of the city; but swallowing up all the others were the denizens of this slum quarter.

There were women with babies, women without babies, and women who might have had babies with them had the Volunteers delayed their operations for a few weeks. There were urchins with boots and urchins without boots, and half-grown people in their fathers' coats, and other half-grown people in their mothers' skirts, and children who would

grow up into touts, and other children who would grow up into beggar-women and flower-girls.

And here and there, like islands in a sea, were prosperous citizens; high and low all brought to a single level by their curiosity. And, of course, there were Republican Volunteers in the crowd, and perhaps agents of the British secret service.

To the man who could bide his time the crowd presented a gap here and a gap there, and I slipped into this place and slipped into that place, and presently had a front row view of what was going forward. The Liffey held us in check. It was a high tide, and the wind sent the wave-tops into the air in spray. A quay was on the farther side, and rising beyond, the lovely building of the Customs House, that morning doomed to death and now in the agony.

"Sure, and it's the clock is still going, God save us," said a lady on my left, drawing a shawl round her infant's face, and giving it a jerk to send it into dreamland.

"And Lady Liberty standing up there so brave, it's her we must see come down," answered her crony.

"Indade, and I hear tell it's Lady Hope up there," retorted she of the baby.

I looked up at the statue of Commerce, which crowned the dome of the building. It seemed the final prize to which all the flames were leaping.

There was a great to-do going on on the farther side, but the building was large, and the

space before it ample. The place was picketed by military, and every now and then some Government motor would dash up or roll away, bringing or carrying off military officials, police officials, and less glorious officials in mufti.

Upon the face of the building firemen were at work, pigmy people of no consequence beside the statue, who nevertheless seemed to be making a last stand like warriors driven to the corners of their country.

For the wind blew steadily, and every now and then sprang upon the great stone building in a squall, and the tops of the waves which held us where we were, would fly off in spray. And the fiery heart of the building would glow and redden and become fiercer, and the firemen would doubly toil at the hose, which looked like the dead body of some great sea-serpent lately come out of the river. Their backs would bend, and it would come after them ever so unwillingly. And other firemen, creeping about the grey face of the building upon their ladders, would peer at the molten heart through some gaping window, and direct tons of water within.

And then the wind would sigh and fall again, and the water roaring down upon some outwork of the conflagration would batter it to death; and a new wind springing up would blow like a giant's bellows upon the quenched sparks, blow a new fury of destruction into them, and they would leap up again.

“Och, it’s a grander sight than the Post Office in Easter week.”

“It is, it is.”

Moving to and fro upon Butt Bridge, and moving up and down the quays, were Crossley tenders with their load of police. Now and then a gust of rage would seize those people, as indeed rage was consuming all Ireland now, the tender would awaken to a new pace and come running in the direction of the crowd, and a panic like a live thing, would seize us; we would start running and bunch up into the alleyways. The car would roll down to where we had been, and the men would lean over its armoured sides, shaking their guns and grinding their teeth, as if their dumb lips were shouting for the phantom enemy to come out of the crowd and give them battle. The car would back and turn, and roll up the quay towards the bridge again, and we would come out from our holes like rats.

“Indade, and it’s shooting ye they would be if ye was to look at them,” said a stout lady in a shawl, gazing up the quay after the departed enemy.

“It’s grand they look in them hats,” said her daughter of twenty, who had enjoyed the scuttle into covert, and was wiping her nose on her finger.

“And it’s meself,” agreed the mother, “will be sad to see the last iv the military, thieves and murderers as they are. It’s a grand sight is the military.”

“Sure, and it’s our boys are going to show them

the way out iv the country. And it's a grand sight our boys will look in green."

"They will. Them Auxiliaries be good fighters. I hear tell this morning they got out iv their motors and stood up there, and banged away with their legs apart and their rifles to their shoulders. I hear tell there was a girl standing by, and one iv them Auxiliaries, sez he to she, 'Lie ye down, mum, or it's shot ye'll be,' and he puts her on the ground, and his foot in the stomach iv her for to protect her, and he goes on shooting, and it's not a minute after he falls dead atop iv her with a bullet to the heart."

At the end of one of these panics, when the police had retreated up the quay and we had emerged into the open, I found myself in a new place. I started to gape across the river again just as somebody beside me said, "How's the world treating you?" I found 47 at my elbow.

"Hallo," I said.

"Hallo," he answered.

"Where have you sprung from?"

"I came along to see what was doing."

"They've made a good job of it?" I suggested, nodding over the river.

"They have," he admitted. "About their best stunt up to date."

"Did you hear how they did it?" I asked.

"They arrived this morning in covered lorries, and brought the straw and paraffin with them. I hear our people"—he dropped his voice as he said

our people—" have got over a hundred prisoners at the Castle, so I don't know how many there were on the job at the start. The Shinnars took the Customs House people by surprise, and, of course, there was nobody armed to put up any resistance. They dismantled the telephones, herded up the clerks into one part of the place, chucked paraffin and straw all over the place, and set everything alight. They had taken the precaution to send men to hold up the firemen at the two nearest fire-stations. The coup was well planned, and they would probably have got away scot free; but there's a story that some pickets standing on the bridge saw a tender of Auxiliaries coming along, got nervous, thought they were discovered, fired on them, and that gave the show away. In two minutes our fellows were pouring out of the Castle, and in five minutes the place was surrounded. I understand the Shinnars inside went on with the work and completed it before they thought of escaping. Some of the fellows taken had petrol on their clothes. There was quite a good show for about twenty minutes between the Auxiliaries outside and the Shinnars trying to get out."

" Did some chaps get done in ? "

" Quite a lot. "

" They seem to have got the laugh on you fellows this time, " I said, nodding over the river again.

" They have, " he agreed.

We stayed a few minutes watching the fire, and then I said, " How did you find things up North ? "

He gave me a look meaning there were better places for talking, and we wormed our way to another part of the crowd. The view was not as good ; but there was plenty of elbow room.

“ Have you been back long ? ” I asked.

“ A day or two.”

“ Well, what about things ? What’s the good of you if you don’t amuse me ? ”

“ I found the people up there another race as far as outsides go to these people. In a way they’re the complement to the Southerners. If you could scrap the religious question so that North and South could intermarry, I believe a first-class race would be produced. I had a look over the internment camp at Ballykinler while I was in that part of the world.”

“ What did you think of the place ? ”

“ It was an internment camp. It doesn’t pretend to be anything better than that. But it was quite a good camp as far as internment camps go. There are about eighteen hundred fellows there in two big enclosures they call cages. Men can go on the run in there if they like. That gives you some idea of the size of the place.”

“ It’s pretty country, isn’t it ? ”

“ In good weather ; but the men can’t see much more than the mountains. Weather has a lot to do with making a place of that sort bearable or not. The fellows who arrived in the winter must have found it pretty ghastly ; but the fellows arriving now haven’t much to complain of beyond

the loss of their liberty. In fact, fellows from the slums and from poor country homes were never better off in some ways."

"That may be; but it must be pretty deadly putting in time."

"They've plenty to do, especially if they like work. The organisation there is quite good. The men are more or less under military discipline, their own military discipline. There's a commandant, who is an internee, to each cage, and orders trickle through from him. In fact, I find responsible Sinn Feiners saying that it would be a good thing for the nation if all the uneducated fellows could be roped into one of these camps for a bit."

"They're educated free, gratis and for nothing?" I asked.

"Arrivals are taken to the commandant's office and are put through it there, for they are very afraid of spies, and everybody suspects everybody else. Each hut has an intelligence officer to find out what he can about his men, to prevent them talking rashly, and to keep note of all that goes on outside the cages. They try to take the numbers of motor-cars, to remember any faces they can get a glimpse at for future reference, and to glean any information that's going."

"But what's taught?"

"Irish first and foremost. There used to be daily drills; but it has been put a stop to. There's not much doubt that they still hold military classes in the huts. There appear to be all sorts of other

classes—book-keeping, shorthand, and lots of commercial things. There's a sprinkling of educated chaps among the others. Let's see what else? There's football and that kind of thing. There are shops of sorts, too. A young chap can knock a bit of fun out of things. The people who find conditions hardest are elderly cultivated men, and, of course, it must be the devil for fathers of families, who must be wondering whether their people are starving or not."

"What are the rations like?"

"The same as the soldiers, and if anybody goes short it's the soldiers. There'd be such a fuss otherwise. At first the Tommies cooked for them; but they made such a fuss they were allowed their own cooks, and the military cooks were left to do their worst among their own people. There are a good many food complaints, chiefly from chaps who never had a square meal in their lives before. Their people send parcels, to the sorrow of the censors, who have to probe into cakes and gape into pots of jam for messages. And some devoted mothers send meat, which goes bad."

"To the still greater sorrow of the censors?"

"The fellows have built their own chapel and furnished it, and services are held by an interned priest."

"I suppose letters are censored?"

"Every one of them. It's the devil's own job. I gave a hand for a bit. I found it stupefying. Of all the letters I opened, only one remained in my

mind five minutes after. It was an in-going letter, a love letter from a girl, a school teacher. This delightful writer had ideals and liked nice things, and he, it seemed, was rather uncouth. She was telling him what he must be dressed in, and how he must look when he came first to see her after release. There were pages of the letter full of tender urgings and gentle reasonings. A fellow feels rather guilty having to put his nose into a thing like that."

I nodded my head.

"One thing the letters did, they proved how thoroughly the rank and file were under the whip of the leaders. On the days of the out-going mail some leading spirit seemed to order what opinion was to be expressed on this or that event, for in most of the letters there was a single well-turned sentence blooming like a rose in the desert of illiteracy. The brain reeled finding the same thing, said more or less correctly, over and over again. Oh, and another thing these letters did was to make one realise how real a thing religion was to a good many of these people."

I was looking at the burning building. "I don't believe that dome is going to go this afternoon."

"Neither do I, and I can't wait for it anyhow."

"Were you at the camp long?"

"Only a day or two. I was on other business. I'm off."

"When are we going to see you again?"

"We'll run across each other soon. I don't suppose I shall be leaving Dublin again."

I knew once 47 intended to go nothing stopped him. I gave a flourish of my hand, and he flourished his and left me.

He had not gone very long when the Auxiliaries paid us another of their intermittent visits, panic swept over us again, and we retreated to our holes to the sound of hundreds of steps pattering on the quay. These terrible men came along again, leaning over the armoured sides of the car, flashing their eyes, grinding their teeth, waving their guns and crying, "Move along there," and then, their fury eased, they turned the car about and sped back to Butt Bridge.

The crowd had thinned a good deal since I came, and there was plenty of room to move about. This time who should I run across but Mrs. Slaney? She was standing very stiffly contemplating the burning building.

"It seems rather a pity," I said.

For once she appeared a little abashed. A great flurry of wind came along, and the inferno within the stone walls glowed, and flames pushed through the stone crevices here and there, leapt out of the windows, climbed through the roof, and turning into smoke, went whirling into the sky. Great pieces of charred material went floating like black birds into the air. All eyes were fixed on the clock, which continued to tick.

"It was the most beautiful building in Ireland," Mrs. Slaney said. "Many a time I have been in there when I was a girl with my cousins, who held

their heads very high on the north side of the city. It seems unfortunate that the Volunteers should have considered it necessary to burn it." Then the old fire came back. "But England is to blame, England for what has happened. The Customs House represents to us the very heart of England. After Dublin Castle everything that is iniquitous in English rule is most strongly represented by that building. England has caused the ruin of that place just in the same way as she caused the destruction of the Post Office, another of our beautiful buildings."

I departed before very long, vanquished. The clock was still going at the time ; but it had stopped before next morning. The following afternoon I was down that way again when the dome, which seemed to be supporting the statue of Commerce, capitulated. The flames pushed through its joints, like the edges of some starving tongue thrusting up from within ; it crumpled, it palpitated, it curled in agony, it disappeared. But the statue stood, defying the lust of the great crowd gathered to see it crash down to the pavement, and was standing high over the wreckage after the last spark had been quenched.

This coup of the Republican Volunteers, though one of the most brilliant they had carried out, was never mentioned with special satisfaction even in the ranks of Sinn Fein. There was regret in the note of rejoicing. Ireland had lost her finest building.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE COMING OF SUMMER

WITH the arrival of June a long dry summer made a beginning. The leaves were thick upon the trees, the birds had done their spring singing and were sending their families out into the world, and the nursemaids and children had all come back again to Stephen's Green. The babies that had filled the perambulators of last year toddled beside the wheels this year, and new babies were lying upon the old cushions.

But political affairs showed no alteration, and though it was fixed in everybody's mind that the British Government was about to make a change in policy, an overture of peace or a fiercer war, there was no sign of this, and affairs were more acute. But these days could not desolate a man as the winter days had done, for now there was sunshine and now there was light.

One morning, as I wandered in the direction of Stephen's Green I saw Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald. She must have come in from her cottage in the hills. I wanted to ask her something ; but she was moving at her own special pace, which resembled nothing

so much as the tireless trot of a wolf, and perceiving I would have to hire a side-car to overtake her, and being without funds, I went into the Green and fell upon a seat in a muse. The nursemaids, the children and the cereopsis goose from Australia drifted out of my vision.

I revived to see walking by me ten Republican Volunteers or ten of the murder gang, according to what were one's political opinions. These people wore trench coats, the pockets of which were swollen with guns and bombs, and they looked very self-conscious. They had come up Grafton Street and in by the main gate there, and they were crossing the Green in couples to the farther end. They must be going to blow up somebody, I thought, and fell into a muse again upon them.

Of course these people were only corner-boys. They were corner-boys in the strictest sense of the word. They were on the way to a corner where they would throw those bombs and let off those guns, and then they would depart home as hurriedly and as safely as they could. They were corner-boys. And yet they were something more than corner-boys. The type of warfare they conducted brought them few casualties ; but one had only to see those self-conscious anxious faces to know it was not the joy of murder that impelled them on the way. These people, who had just walked by, were going to render a certain service at a street corner because they believed their country needed that service. Why deny them any lustre that was theirs ?

I fell out of my muse about ten minutes later when I heard the roar of a couple of bombs and some rifle fire. Bullets clipped the leaves overhead, and I felt ruffled. They must have blown somebody up, I thought, and fell into a second muse.

As a matter of fact they had nearly blown my wife up, and also several women with perambulators; but the only person who got shot was an old beggar woman sitting on the steps of St. Vincent's Hospital. My wife said when the bombs were thrown and the Auxiliaries were firing back, the Volunteers seized the perambulators and hustled them and the frantic nurses into the shelter of Stephen's Green. Whether this act was to protect the children, or whether it was to take suspicion off the Volunteers, she could not make up her mind. Let us give judgment for the first.

I awakened from my second muse to find a gun being flourished at my stomach, and a fiery Auxiliary, an ex-officer and a loyal gentleman or one of Hamar Greenwood's hired assassins, according to a man's views, ordering me to "go over there and be searched." I looked "over there," and saw all the men in the Green bunched together and the Auxiliaries searching them. I started to go over, and the Auxiliary flew after another solitary individual. There were half a dozen bushes on the way I could have dropped guns behind.

In a minute or two I had joined the bunch of men. I began to feel in a hurry all of a sudden, for it was getting towards lunch-time, and when a

queue was formed, I took an opportunity to get into the front of it. It was after I was well in position that I remembered my pocket-book had entries in it, names of Sinn Feiners and titles of pamphlets, which might cause these gentlemen in Balmoral bonnets to prick up their ears. They might feel it on their conscience to haul me off to the Castle to explain myself, and it was easier to enter the Castle Yard than to leave the Castle Yard. I became humble. I withdrew, I evaporated, I murmured after you, sir, and I went crabwise to the last place in the line. It took me twenty minutes and a good deal of bother to pull the necessary leaves from my pocket-book without being noticed, tear them into little bits, and sprinkle them in the grass.

When my turn came the Auxiliary said without touching me, "You'll do."

"Search me," I demanded.

He smiled, patted my pockets, and said, "You'll do."

They knew the sort of man to look for.

But, of course, anybody who knew the ropes realised the searching of this line of men had been pathetic, for over on the seats sat nursemaids and little typists, and other high-heeled and short-skirted people. If any of the ambushers had had the misfortune to be shut in the gardens, their guns were not on them. They would be in some bush, or they would be in the dress of one of those demure maidens.

It was nothing strange to be stopped by the military in the street and searched for arms, and the custom was growing to let women carry the guns until they were wanted and receive them again afterwards, for women were not allowed to be searched except in emergency by women searchers. The British Government was paternal in some things to the end, and earned the righteous scorn of Loyalist and Republican alike.

About this time we paid visits to Mrs. Erskine Childers. Her house was one of the rocks of Republicanism. One met there the more extreme Cumann na mBan, and as the Cumann na mBan consisted of women they were nearly all extreme. It was whispered that all sorts of people on the run visited the place; but the ordinary visitor to the house never met these people. It was necessary for Mrs. Childers to lead an inactive life, and her energies had gone into her intellect. She sat all day in her library dipping into her books, and she had become very well educated politically.

The rule that the convert makes the fiercest apostle held good in the case of these two—of Mrs. Childers, an American citizen, and of Childers, the Englishman, who in earlier years had served Britain and the British Empire in the army and the navy. The nationality of Mrs. Childers, and the fact that she was a person of breeding in a movement where most of the followers belonged to the people, made her valuable, and all wandering strangers whose sympathy it was desirable to

enlist, were taken along to her with the words, "Oh, you must see Mrs. Erskine Childers. She can tell you so much." Mrs. Childers, refined, daintily dressed, intellectual, lying on her couch, put them right upon the wrongs of Ireland.

The strangest of the birds of passage that passed through Ireland during these troubled times were Americans, who, one and all, belied their national reputation for shrewdness. Those I came across in Ireland were emotional, simple individuals, ready to credit any well-told story.

What of Childers himself, the toiling Childers, the small harassed man, for ever pedalling his bicycle; Childers who, of all those hard-working people, outworked all others; Childers who looked as though he might die and still sit upon his bicycle with his legs going round and round? This toiling Republican, whom the British Government in the strangeness of its ways left free, was he a man with a broken heart, and this very fever of work the effort to escape his sorrow? Was there truth in the whisper that he was a disappointed English naval man, who in pique had thrown himself into Irish affairs? Then, indeed, he was a small man, and all his furious pedalling would never bring him balm. But if his work for Ireland represented truth to him, so that no doubt ever came to make him irresolute, so that he never thought hungrily of his own country which he had forsaken, then, indeed, he was bigger than the

common run of man, and his toil may have brought repose to his spirit.

Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald had a cottage in the hills, not very far from the city. We made occasional pilgrimages there. The two-mile walk from the station was nothing on those first kind summer days. There were pools of shade for the traveller to wade through under the trees; the lower lands were golden with gorse; the sky was high and serene. Yet the country bore more marks of ruin than the city.

An occasional gaunt building, such as the skeleton of the Customs House or the General Post Office, was all the wear and tear the city showed, though observant people could find bullet holes in a good many windows, some of them small and clean as if an augur had bored them, others brutally done, so that the cracks had run all about the pane. Sometimes a great plate-glass window would be annihilated, sometimes the fragments of some bomb leaping from the pavement would tear a score of holes in a door and stay embedded there; but next day the glazier would be along with his putty and the decorator with his paint brush, and there would be nothing to see.

It was different in the country. One came upon trees felled across the road, or lying prone, leaving just enough space for the cart of the marketing peasant. One came upon walls tumbled to the ground, and a pyramid of broken masonry lying in wait for the hurrying police tender.

Round abrupt corners one stepped into trenches dug across the road to receive the front wheels of some military lorry shaking upon its way.

Military and police presently took with them little bridges to engineer the lorries across the trenches, and so with a bare halt went throbbing on their way; but the graves set in the road for leviathan fare stayed there unattended, yawning for the poor peasant and his cart. Nobody filled these gaps, perhaps from patriotism, perhaps because such busybody act might call down the vengeance of the Republican Army hanging somewhere in the hills, or equally probably because the tired peasant, having negotiated the yawn with his own wit, left other people to be as wise as he, and went on home, looking neither right nor left, in case he saw more than was wise.

But summer had come quite indifferent to these things; and by wood and hedge and stream it had arrived a-blooming; it had gone rolling up and down the hills, and into the shining sky.

Those who knew the way about the slopes of these hills could spy outposts of the Republican Army, men moving about the hills with telescopes, sometimes the flutter of a signalling flag. What a draught for bold youth this mountain air! The veriest bent-backed clerk, taken out here from his city office, would begin to straighten and stamp in the high romantic manner; how then some fiery country boy led to these high places and told Ireland's fatal story? High up there, each man

his individual eagle, staring down with unfilmed eye upon the faint white roads netting the fair country, they could mark the hurrying police tenders and exult at their freedom.

These hills held caves where men retreated in extremity after the police had raided the farm-houses that usually gave them shelter.

On a shoulder of the outside range of these hills—high enough for the sea to be seen, so near to Dublin that the city seemed to be lying a few miles away in a smoky pool—Mrs. Desmond Fitzgerald had a cottage and a garden plot. She dug in the garden while there was excuse for digging, and it was there she seemed to soften for a few moments, and let some of this Republican load, which she had taken upon herself to carry, fall off her back.

To the peasants of that hamlet, which went climbing up the pass for a mile, she must have been some one come from the bigger world, a sojourner with people whose names were in the papers, on whose heads was a price, to stimulate the cottagers and hold them to their purpose, to refill the cup of village louts drunk with the grandeur of the times.

The fact that the Republicans were a small man fighting a giant was worth a second army to them, for however just the big man's cause, his efforts against a smaller man are thankless, and the world, which never goes to the roots of a matter, has no sympathy to give him.

On the British Army and the Police fell none of the glory the gods were raining down. They

carried out their orders under the most adverse conditions, and got the knocks and fatigues without the applause. They must have had to prop their energies now and then with the remembrance that though the nation whose servants they were had little interest in their doings, dismissed them with the morning bacon and the propped-up newspaper, their thankless task had as great use as any which trumpets heralded and all the world streamed out to cheer.

One day I ran across 47, in Phoenix Park of all places. Some tender moment had brought him to walk among the flowers there. It was one of the few times I saw him before he saw me. He seemed to be communing with himself, like a monk pacing a cloisteral retreat. I supposed he was wondering how long his lonely vigil was still to last.

I crossed the green behind him and said, "Hallo. I see you have the pip."

"I've not got the pip. I've had enough of Ireland, though."

"It's a tip-top day."

He pondered this, and then said something that surprised me. It showed which way his thoughts were running.

"The heart of a giant must beat under an agent's coat. He goes alone about his work. He goes unpraised about his work. He has no armed men at his back. To-day, alone. To-morrow, alone. Every man an oyster he must open. Ha. ha! he cries, and joins once again in the laugh

against what he loves. He waits, he waits. He watches, he watches. That is the order of his day. Let him open his eyes a little wider, let him prick his ears a little sharper ; some hurt may be coming to the country he serves. He grows tired in the end.

“ But he must not grow tired. Here and here and here he steps lightly, surely, certainly. And how does he open each golden gate ? His key ? He concentrates on what he takes in hand to the exclusion of everything else.”

We had fallen into line and were stalking over the lawn. 47 began again after a few steps.

“ Our mutual acquaintance has a story that on a Continental stunt it was necessary he should become a waiter, therefore he chose a waiter in his hotel, and sat down for six weeks and watched him. He looked at no other waiter. He looked at nothing else. He learned how a waiter waited for a tip, how he coughed on the plates, how he picked his teeth with the forks. That mutual acquaintance of ours knew the way to go about things.”

“ Are you people any nearer clearing things up ? ” I asked. “ By gad, you all seem to work hard enough for your living. The Auxiliaries and the Black-and-Tans are going day and night.” He made no answer, and I added, “ I may as well tell you the Sinn Feiners can go on for ever at the present rate of things. You might have netted them all in the beginning ; there are too many of them now. You’ve pricked and pricked and pricked them until you’ve pricked the whole nation alive.

Why do you people delude yourselves by making statements every few weeks that the Irish situation is well in hand ? It's pathetic to listen to you, and the awakening must come sooner or later."

"It's beginning already in a few places," 47 answered. "You'll find there's a change of policy before long. The police chase will turn into something that can be dignified by the name of war, or there will be an offer made and negotiations will begin. You'll find it will be negotiations. Whether war or negotiations the issue will be the same. Ireland will obtain a full measure of self-government." He stalked on a step or two and said, "For the old order is changing and the British Empire, whether it likes it or not, is going to change from a number of nations dominated by a central power to equal nations linked by a common history."

"It's time you got a move on," I retorted. "India and Egypt are starting to go along the same road as Ireland. There are the same symptoms to recognise the disease by. Kidnappings, assassinations, and plenty of intimidation on both sides. Why not give India and Egypt what they are going to get gracefully instead of having them threaten it out of you ? "

47 shrugged his shoulders and suffered from one of his bursts of philosophy. "Perhaps it is written the history of man is to be one of confusion and pain from beginning to end. So does the spirit master matter and gather its experience."

After that we wandered round among the flowers, which were a new lot and as good as usual ; then we took our separate ways home.

“ It’s a longer *au revoir* than usual,” I said, flourishing a hand.

“ How’s that ? ”

“ I’m off to Ulster for the twelfth of July. I’m thinking of going quite soon.”

“ You may find a change when you come back. Peace or something of the sort.”

“ By all means.”

My road always lay through the centre of the city, and coming to College Green one met the inevitable paper boys bawling their wares, and if one still had curiosity enough to buy another issue, one opened it to find “ Auxiliaries capture a Number of Armed Civilians,” or “ Mysterious Death. Man’s Body found in Field. On the Victim’s Breast was pinned a piece of paper bearing the words—‘ Spies and Informers beware. By Order. I.R.A.’ ”

CHAPTER XXV

THE EVE OF PEACE

THE concussion of the bomb nearly threw me off my feet. For a few moments I thought that I was hit. In a dream I could see people falling, and I realised that things were darting by me like fast and furious flies. The lorry had slackened speed, and the Auxiliaries were standing up shooting. A man prone on the ground a few yards away raised himself cautiously on his hands. Then I came to life. At the same moment a man in the gutter decided that the moment to retire had come. He scrambled to his feet and, crouching low, dashed past me round the corner. Others ran with him wildly. The fire became concentrated on the corner of the wall. I stepped in a panic into shelter, picking up a child as I stepped. Women fell over perambulators after me, nurses abandoned babies and snatched them up again, children were flung from side to side and were pushed into shelter by people who wanted shelter for themselves. The child I held was about three. Its face had grown a dull red, and it caught its breath until I thought it would burst. The only thing to do was to smack

it. That took its attention off other things, and it howled and breathed quite naturally. There was no longer an ambusher to be seen.

"What a life!" I exclaimed to a woman beside me.

"Terrible," she declared indignantly. "I declare this is the third ambush I've wheeled my baby into this week. I can show you a bullet hole through her pram top this very minute. People ought to be ashamed throwing bombs in a crowd."

"Indeed, the Shinnars are only doing their duty," broke in a girl. "Why do the Black-and-Tans shoot back? It's only babies they hit."

"And aren't the Black-and-Tans doing their duty, too?" retorted the woman with the baby, who was thoroughly roused. "Indeed, and the Shinnars are taking no risks, they are not. Did ye ever see a Shinnar yet that came out in the open? Did ye ever see the Shinnar that——"

I walked home, leaving behind me a heated argument, and feeling rubbed up the wrong way. I decided I was quite glad to be joining Himself in the North in a day or two.

Mrs. O'Grady met me at the door.

"It's yourself that's all right? I was after saying a rosary for you this very minute. God save us! It's the worst we've had yet. I thought the house would come down."

"I was right in the middle of it. I made sure I was hit at first. In fact my head is still ringing."

"And so it would," Mrs. O'Grady agreed.

“O’Grady is the very same. Miss O’Farrell is still out, and the mistress is in a fuss over it to be sure.”

She tramped off in her sandshoes to get my lunch, and I went into the sitting-room.

The door opened suddenly and in bustled Mrs. Slaney.

“Such an explosion!” she exclaimed. “I’m glad you weren’t hit. I was wondering where you were. Miss O’Farrell isn’t in yet. I hope she’s all right.”

“Nice place to ambush,” I said, feeling aggressive. “The street was filled with perambulators.”

Mrs. Slaney flushed.

“I have no doubt the Sinn Feiners find it necessary,” she answered. “Why do the soldiers take advantage of the perambulators? They’ve no business to pass down crowded streets as they do. They do it for protection. They have no business in Ireland at all. Well, you’ve really been ambushed? You can write home to Australia now, and tell them all about it.”

Another crash cut her sentence short, and she flushed deeper.

“That seems to be in Stephen’s Green. Do you think that child will ever get home for her dinner?”

“She won’t leave the office if it’s not safe.”

The shooting stopped, and we went to the front door to see what was to be seen. There were people running all along the street, and the jarvies from

Stephen's Green had whipped up their horses and taken refuge in our direction. A tender of Auxiliaries drove slowly, the men in it looking this way and that for suspects.

"Brutes! Blackguards! Threatening the people like that! I'd like to make faces at them!"

"Please don't while I'm here."

"Ah, but that's how I feel. And our boys aren't always responsible for the bombs. Three people told me that they saw the big ambush last night, and that the soldiers threw the bomb deliberately themselves."

"What for?"

"So that they could have an excuse for firing at the crowd."

"Well, I saw the bomb thrown to-day, and they certainly did not throw it themselves. A bomb isn't a toy, Mrs. Slaney. I shouldn't think many soldiers would throw the bomb for the pleasure of ambushing themselves. The man that threw it this morning was standing beside me, and he fell flat on his face when it was thrown, and then he scuttled away among the babies and the perambulators."

She changed the subject. "When are you joining your husband? Mrs. O'Grady wants a holiday, so I have given her next week. You and I will be alone. Miss O'Farrell is going away for a few days at the end of this week."

"Really?" I made up my mind quickly. "I'm going away at once."

"Oh!" Her face fell. "I had pictured a nice little time together. I thought perhaps we could get our meals together. It would save you, and would be company for me."

"I'm afraid I'm going next Friday."

"Well, I must try to get some one. I can't stay in the house alone. O'Grady isn't much good."

She went slowly upstairs, and I remained on the doorstep watching the people grow calmer. While I watched Miss O'Farrell came hurrying home.

"I've had a dreadful time," she said breathlessly. She looked shaken. "There was an ambush in Stephen's Green a minute ago. I had to lie on my tummy for ages listening to the bullets flying over me. I was too terrified to move."

"That must have been the last ambush."

"Yes. I don't think I'm a national hero. I'd hate to be shot." She talked over her shoulder as she mounted the stairs. "It's made me fearfully late. I've hardly time for my lunch."

"Wonderful spirit the Irish girls have," said Mrs. Slaney, two hours later, as she encountered me on my way out. "Little Miss O'Farrell wasn't at all put out by her experience this morning. 'Only another ambush,' she said, when I asked her why she was late. Wonderful spirit, and it's all through the nation. You can write to Australia about that. It's little incidents that make the world thrill."

I was alone in the flat for another three days. The rest of the house had gone a-holidaying, and

there was only Mrs. Slaney overhead. On Monday Mrs. O'Grady would have flown, or rather limped, from the basement. On these nights sleep was impossible. Crash after crash shook the silence, and the rattle of rifle fire was never ending. Some nights the concussion was so great that every time I put the window up it was shaken down again. When it was very bad I pulled down the blind, feeling rather like the soldiers on guard at the ruined Customs House, who crept into their bell tents at night when they were being sniped from the neighbouring roofs. It was a poor security, but it was security of a sort, and the only security granted at that time to the citizens of Dublin.

One night I saw a figure running down the opposite pavement, and crouching against the walls of the houses. The man came to a garden with a tree hanging over a fence. He had time to get on top of the fence under the tree before the Auxiliaries rattled down the street after him. He stood quite still on top of the fence. I could only see a shadow where his toes must have been sticking out, the rest was hidden in the branches of the tree. The Auxiliaries dropped out of their lorry and searched up and down. The toes did not stir. I began to take a passionate interest in those toes. There is an appeal in anything hunted. After a little the lorry filled again and rattled away. The toes still remained without motion on the top of the fence ; but later when I looked they had gone.

Mrs. Slaney grew more and more warlike as

the days passed. Probably she passed sleepless nights too, and the strain was telling on her.

"Wonderful to have a husband a patriot," she declared on one occasion.

I remembered the wives of the patriots I knew, and recalled them to her memory.

"Rubbish, Mrs. Slaney," I said. "A patriot isn't more of a hero than another man. Look at the limelight a patriot gets to help him. If there was no limelight, no publicity, a lot of the patriots would be a sorry crew."

I had said rather more than I meant out of exasperation; but it was Mrs. Slaney's fault.

I made my way into the street thinking over my theory. Political patriots held no monopoly. There were heroes that worked and died unheard of, heroes of exploration, of medicine, of religion, of literature, anything one liked to name. My musings came suddenly to an end. I had almost stepped in a pool of blood. It began halfway down the steps of a house, and continued to the gutter. It looked as if some one had carried a bucket of blood and had thrown it down the steps. I looked at it with a feeling of nausea, which increased at the sight of a dog's footsteps running through it. Far along the pavement those bloody footsteps led me on my way. Here the owner of them had lingered sniffing, here he had chatted to a friend, here he had hesitated. It was a long time before the little red footsteps became less plain, and still longer before they died out altogether. I turned a corner, and a

hundred yards in front of me lay another pool of blood. The horror of killing swept over me again. These two pools stirred something in me that the riddled windows had never done. Those red foot-steps had brought the red ruin that was upon the land home to me far more than any raid or fear of a raid had done, more than any ambush. They seemed to sum up the whole case against war, to lay it red and bare upon the pavement. Ireland could never do without England, nor England without Ireland, for man cannot do without man.

The next morning we were raided for the last time. It was at eight o'clock. Mrs. Slaney had gone to Mass, and I was alone in the house, except for O'Grady, who had finished polishing the brass, and had retired to his own quarters to make ready to go to work. I was used to my sitting-room filling suddenly with men armed to the teeth, therefore it was not upsetting to welcome them again. I had a pile of *Irish Bulletins*, the forbidden organ of Sinn Fein, in the bottom drawer of my desk, and the recollection of them was the only thing that made me uneasy.

"Where's Mrs. Fitzgerald?" demanded an old friend with a scar running down his face.

I glanced outside before I answered. Mrs. Fitzgerald was considered formidable enough to merit more lorries and armoured cars than her husband. Wherever I looked were Auxiliaries, and the house was filled with them.

"Mrs. Fitzgerald has gone. I've had her flat for two months now," I answered.

"What's your name?"

I gave it.

He softened perceptibly. "You have the same Christian name as my wife. Now we shall get on really well."

"I'm glad."

"All these things are Mrs. Fitzgerald's, I know them," he said, looking round the room like an auctioneer in fancy dress.

"I took the flat over from her."

"That's her desk?"

"Yes."

"I must search it."

"Please do. You'll only find my manuscript in there; but do go through it. I'd love you to. I'd like to be sure somebody read it. Publishers are such unkind people."

I heard a smothered oath from the other room. The door was open, and I saw an officer with my stocking bag. He had evidently run his finger on a darning needle. He cast the bag from him, and turned his attention to my chest of drawers.

The officer in charge opened the top of the desk. The *Bulletins* were in the bottom drawer; but one that I had been reading was on top of the desk. It lay face downwards almost under his hand. I couldn't make up my mind whether to take the bull by the horns and own up to them, or try my luck. My luck stood me in good stead. He

picked up a horoscope I had been casting. He had another attack of humanity. He put down the gun he had in his hand, and turned to me with the map.

"By Jove, are you interested in astrology? I started it during the war, and before I came on this stunt."

"I started it when Curfew was long and life became perceptibly shorter."

He propounded the map to me, as if he loved to hear himself on the subject.

"Is there anywhere I can go for lessons in Dublin?"

I told him where to go, wondering what the feelings of the meek astrologers would be when an Auxiliary armed to the teeth stalked into their presence.

He flung down the map on top of the impious *Bulletin*, and then ran his hand through the mass of papers and letters. He stooped to the first drawer, then to the second; but my luck held good. Halfway through the second drawer he straightened up and said—

"I'll take your word for it."

"Don't do that," I said. "Better finish your job."

He laughed. "No, I'll trust you." He walked to the door of the other room where the searchers were busy making hay. "Stop searching," he said. "Mrs. Fitzgerald isn't in the mattress."

After that we stood a few minutes in light conversation.

The tenders went off down the street with a flourish. At every window as usual a head was watching, and a few of the more daring spirits hovered upon their doorsteps. The day had begun well.

Mrs. Slaney returned five minutes after. I think she was glad to have missed the raid, although she declared that she wished she had been present to let the men have her opinion of them.

Worse things happened in Dublin every day. The Sinn Feiners began to carry out their "executions" in the streets. Two Auxiliaries were shot coming out of a Grafton Street Picture House. It was said a woman pointed them out, and when the dying men were lying on the pavement nobody dared go near them. Two more Auxiliaries were shot while they were sitting at tea with their wives. The kidnappings were going on. The military and police never rested, and all night long there was shooting. People were sick to death at the state of things.

Nobody ever said what was at the bottom of his or her heart, for nobody was sure of the other person's beliefs, and everybody feared the power of the opposite side. Meanwhile the country was going to rack and ruin, and was there a human man or woman who did not long for peace ?

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TWELFTH OF JULY

Now that the height of the summer had come, and each day was hotter than the last, there began an exodus from Dublin of all who had opportunity, and among the speeding guests was myself. I left my wife behind and winged a flight to Ulster, being primed that I would have taken no true stock of Ireland until I had examined the strange race that moved, and lived, and had its being in the north-east of the country. It was said that the first half of July was the season to study these people, as their national fury waxed greatest at that time of year, reaching its most notable height on the twelfth of the month, and thereafter abating.

The end of June found me setting out upon my journey.

The train that drew me out of Amiens Street railway station, Dublin, and disgorged me at Belfast, did undoubtedly take me out of one country and set me down in another. I left Ireland and came to a Scotland, not a Scotland identical with that over the sea; but a Scotland that smacked of the other Scotland in speech, in hardihood, and in the make of mind that, in the face of a Catholic

Ireland, made its sons cherish the stern old beliefs of Covenanting days. Behold some later race, vigorous, masculine, most tenacious, had breasted an intervening sea and found a footing in Ireland. New influences coming upon the fathers had modified the children ; but time had not yet worn out the original mould.

Go north and you will find the answer to the question, Why are the Irish always divided ? The north-east quarter has the same winds as blow about the rest of Ireland, has the same roads as those on which the rest of Ireland walks, grows the same grass ; but has another people in whom it breeds a separate vision. The statement that Ireland absorbs all who come to her, making them her own, is a poet's dream or a politician's romance.

The two Irish peoples are poles apart—the Orangemen masculine, stern, uncompromising, when they are spiritual, alight with the steady burning fire of Puritan days taken out of some old history book, touched with mediæval narrowness, energetic, clean ; Catholic Ireland, feminine and temperamental, poetical, easy going, lazy, able in dream to conceive the noblest ideal, unfitted in character to carry it to a conclusion, broad where the Orangemen are narrow, pliable where the Orangemen are rigid.

Why did the old Covenanting blood never flow into the Celtic veins as other blood has done ? Have political differences been all the cause ? Is the Orangeman's love of Empire as uncompromising

as he says ? Is Celtic Ireland's hate of Britain implacable ? I for one do not believe that Ulster's love is so burning hot ; nor am I sure that Celtic Ireland's hate of Britain is so undying. The Irish flame burns up now and then, fanned by a new generation of leaders ; but when the bellows cease to blow there seems to be no fire.

The answer is religion.

It is not strange that these two peoples should be divided in religious belief, for a man's temperament leads his beliefs, and the teachings of the two Churches fit the types of mind. The Protestant Church, offering a father's stern love, fits the self-reliant Orange temperament ; and the Catholic Church, which holds out a mother's universal arms to the tired spirit, answers the Celtic need.

The religious bigotry of this part of the world was astonishing to a stranger. It was mediæval in vigour, and it was undeniable that the Protestants were the real offenders. There was a certain reason for this state of things, inasmuch as Catholic Ireland greatly outnumbered Protestant Ireland, and the weak man is always up in arms. At those seasons when the Protestant God seemed to demand of His devotees a greater fury of worship than usual, there would come a gust of religious intolerance, which brought the Middle Ages back again.

How soon will these two poles, which are the complement of each other, meet ? If these two peoples would come together, and the hardy northern blood flow into the numerous gentler veins

of the South, so that a new race, stiffer than the South, more imaginative and tolerant than the North, should be bred on the ancient hills, in the old dales, Ireland's golden age, which poets have sung about so long, might return again.

They told me in Dublin that the annual fury of these northern people begins to wax on the first of July, and reaches its height upon the twelfth of the month ; but before the end of June the Orange drummer has taken his drum from its cover and the canes to beat it off the shelf, and on the fine evenings, after work, when the summer warmth is heating his blood, he sets himself to a preliminary drumming, his insistent summons rolls down the street, and a careless world is reminded that once upon a time a certain King William of immortal memory crossed the Boyne River to the sound of drums and fifes. The fifeman has dusted his fife and blown a preliminary roulade, and those who are not musicians have cleared their throats to cry the more vigorously "To hell with the Pope."

This year, on the eve of the twelfth, greater events were to befall than the stout Orangemen, in their black and their orange sashes, dreamed of. The murderer was to come forth, and the world was to receive him as equal. First, the South full of rumours, then, while men shook their heads in disbelief, news that peace had come. Out of the blackest clouds the dove had swooped back into sight, had alighted after endless flight and folded its wings.

Morning brought news which evening elaborated; evening's news had staled at breakfast time. Post-haste the rumours came. Negotiations ! Truce ! As if a magician's wand had waved them forth, the Sinn Fein leaders became flesh and blood, emerged into the daylight. A pause in the hunt ! An armistice signed ! The phantom army have taken their fingers from the triggers of their guns ; the police have switched off the engines of their motors !

It was said men with beards like goats and with the talons of wild beasts descended from the hills ; the patriots who had gone to bed with the owls and the rabbits returned like demigods home.

Oh, disillusioned Ulster, whose comrade, whose bigger brother, whose ally of so many oaths has at this most exalted season of the year, under your very nose, at your very front door, eaten his words, plucked the scornful phrase off his tongue, called traitor friend, called assassin comrade, taken his hand out of yours and thrust it into the palm of your enemy !

Oh, drummers, roll your drums ; oh, fifemen, shrill your fifes : not all your notes, not all your drumming will bring back your belief in Britain.

But before you condemn too bitterly, search the hearts of those who have done this. Pity, then, may take anger's place. The story has ended as most human stories end. High speech has worn itself out in wind, enemy has met enemy on a common level, each giving something to the other,

each receiving something from the other, as all men must who rub shoulders on this planet.

If in man's sight this pact has brought humiliation on Loyalist and Republican alike, it may not be so in the sight of Heaven. Man's memory is short, he remembers the ends of things; but the gods, to whom the past is the present, and yesterday is to-day, recall the days of difficulty, the hours of labour and the moments of sacrifice, and do not look to the result so much as to the making of the result.

On the twelfth of the month a brazen sun climbed up into the sky, and after an early breakfast we came out of our doors garbed for the fray. All the world was there, and half the world was wearing orange sashes, and as a man was of low or high degree in his own Orange lodge, so was his sash pricked over with fewer or with more silver badges.

The men came forth in dark suits newly lifted from chests of drawers, with sombre bowlers on their heads; the women, following a happier tradition, wore frocks that vied with the coloured sashes, but iron rule demanded gloved hands.

We were a village going by train to a rallying-ground. Our lodge and our band went with us. The big drummer had his cottage at the end of the row, and every now and then came such a roll of drumming as I have heard many a time in an African village. It wakened memories of palms and fevers and alligators. The fifes were being

tested, flights of notes fell from the air. The ear was tickled and then cheated, and then another flight tickled it again. Round a bend of the road came a rolling and a shrilling, and then banners waving in the sun. Other villages were marching in to join us to the rallying-ground.

The train came in, and I was lifted up on the first wave of a swelling tide, and sent into a carriage through the gaping door. First me, and after me the world. There surged in men with pikes, there surged in men with Bibles upon poles, there surged in children munching sweets, there surged in women with babies and without babies ; and when from my corner I looked to the door, and wondered when would some one put out a hand and close it, there followed in other men with drums and other men with banners, and ever more men with spare drum-heads, and ever more children munching sweets.

The engine jumped from a standing position, the carriages jumped after it, in our carriage we rolled a single time forward and backward, and then we were jerking through the country, past birds I could not hear, past flowers I could not smell, under skies I could not see.

The stations came. We stopped at every one of them. Nobody got out ; but another fife and drum band got in, and other men with Bibles upon sticks, and other men with pikes, and other men with banners, and other fluttered women, and other munching children. We left a following on the platform waving us on our way. Then we

jerked over the final mile or two, and sounds of drum and fife, and glimpses of road where banners waved and bands played told us of Orange lodges rallying to the trysting-ground.

The trysting-ground of Ballynahinch was full to the brim, and certain of the people who had arrived there were also full to the brim. The day was another of those blazing days this spendthrift summer was so prodigal of, and many a wise man passed between swing doors, passed several times between swing doors, before falling into line for the procession. As there were ever more lodges coming in from the country, and ever more wise men passing in between swing doors, those who were already inside could find no way out, and whether they ever got out, or whether they are sitting there to this day, I am not able to tell.

All things start at last, and the procession moved on its way.

Across the high street, at a spot where a hill began and went winding up, was an archway, which seemed to be the holiest ground. From the arch dangled all sorts of symbols, most of which I have forgotten: one was a wooden ladder; these same symbols the stout Orangemen wore in silver upon their sashes.

I stood beside this arch, and fifty-seven lodges went drumming up the hill. Ha, drummer, whip those parchment faces! Where are your long canes? Whip and whip again, until the veins at your wrists swell and the blood spouts forth. Was

ever Protestant wrist made that grew tired, for is not the Pope himself within your drum ? As the new lodge approached the arch, the pike men ran before, lifted their pikes on high, put the heads together, and the rest of the company, lifting their hats in deference to the arch, passed through. Ha, you, big drummer, need not lift your hat ! Are you not doing enough whipping and whipping and whipping those two parchment faces between which writhes His Holiness ?

The last lodge went up the hill, the squeal of fifes and the roar of drums were on ahead. I fell in with the great following which followed after.

We went up, and up, and up, and so did the sun in the sky. There was lemonade to buy, but that was not for me. There was beer in the town behind, and that was for all who fell by the way-side. We licked our parched lips. Mothers herding small children before them cried as they came to water, " Hi, Willie, come out of that ! There's a wee Pope in that pond ! "

The ascent was done, we flowed into a large field where people had rested their banners against the trees, had put their fifes and drums upon the grass, and were drinking ginger-beer and eating bananas. On a wooden stand certain speakers were collected, and round there the press was greatest.

What, is the wound so deep ? One after another you stand upon that rough wooden platform in the

fiery sun, and speak as if all old ties were broken now that Britain holds out a hand to the enemy, and offers it equality and respectability.

In good time I had had my fill of the speakers, and wandered away, turning over the history of the last seven years. Surely humour was its chief ingredient? Ulster had been Celtic Ireland's best friend. Had Ulster not made difficulties in the beginning, Ireland would gladly have accepted a limited measure of self-government, and there would have been no Sinn Féin to sweep the country like a wind. Seven years of external and internal difficulties, of irresolution and changing opinion on the part of the British Government, the steadfast following of an ideal on the Irish side, had brought two-thirds of Ireland a wider measure of self-government than it had previously conceived, and had left Ulster as she was in the beginning, but soured alike with friend and foe. A story like all human stories—muddled and painful and ludicrous, and with its patches of splendour.

As I came to the lower end of the field on the way to the railway station, nine drummers stood drumming in a row. All the exasperation of those seven years of British half-measures had passed into those eighteen arms, into the swelling veins of those wrists, into the eighteen hands which grasped the long canes that whipped so passionately the eighteen great parchment drumheads. Nine Popes writhed in those drums as eighteen canes beat on and on and on, lest if they stopped a moment His

Holiness would step from out the Vatican, his triple crown upon his head, and hearing of Britain's apostasy and Ulster's loneliness, would then and there put out a hand, and gather every Orangeman upon that green to Rome.

CHAPTER XXVII

TRUCE

Now that an armistice had been signed, and Dublin was again the centre of affairs, my wife and I packed up at the end of the Orange celebrations and returned home. We arrived in the middle of another blazing hot day, and as we rattled from the station on a jaunting-car, Crossley tenders full of unarmed Auxiliaries with towels about their necks passed us, going in the direction of the sea. It was an astonishing sight, and more eloquent than all the newspaper accounts.

There had been no public rejoicings to speak of at the turn of affairs. For a night or two fires had been lighted in the streets, and small boys had danced round them, and the public had shown a reluctance to go indoors and to bed ; but the late hours were little more than an expression of the people's satisfaction at the liberty which had followed the lifting of the Curfew. Irishmen and the British troops in Ireland took the cessation of hostilities in a sober spirit, as if every man carried a hidden sorrow. The gods had humbled all alike and given victory to none.

But though soldier and civilian both felt something of the melancholy that follows the cessation of all protracted trials, public satisfaction at the new conditions was undeniable, and as the truce continued opinions were expressed with a freedom unknown during the reign of terror. It was evident the man in the street had longed for stable conditions, and was eager to accept the compromise which had been effected.

Republican leaders who had managed to elude capture to the end had come down from the Olympian heights. They had magically materialised, and might be seen in the streets rubbing shoulders with common men, dining in restaurants off forks that previously had gone into common mouths, wiping their lips with napkins that before had known less glorious patrons. They were joined soon by such deputies of Dail Eireann as had been in prison and in internment camps, and were unconditionally released for the furtherance of the negotiations.

Young men, romantic men, high-spirited men had gone up to the Olympian heights two years, three years, four years before ; there came down sober men, weary men, nervy men, and men with blood upon their hands. Rumour had long had it that many of the Olympians were on the verge of collapse, and rumour had been true. Chastened demigods came down to walk among common men again.

The Sunday after our return we went out to

Mrs. Fitzgerald's cottage. Her husband, the Minister of Propaganda, was out of prison, and came wandering in from the dining-room. Under his eyes were marks of wear and tear. He was one of the least provincial of the Dail deputies, had the easy manner of a travelled man, and gave glimpses of an educated mind. The Minister of Commerce turned up during the afternoon. He had been much hunted before the armistice ; but he had not been taken. He looked very strung up, and admitted he had nerves. "I shall dye my hair if it starts again," he announced. "There's nothing to beat that." Later two uniformed Republican officers dropped in from a camp on the hill at the back. It was astonishing to sit among these people who had been shadows a few days before.

The camp at the back of the cottage was a military centre for the district, and now and then the local volunteers were reviewed there. They came from all points on bicycles and on foot, the new generation, the young men, the people who were most affected by this national birth, this Irish renaissance. Some leader of the Republican Army would be there to review, a man who a few weeks before had a price on his head, and who could not have been seen by common men without permits, passwords, and all the paraphernalia of the Sinn Fein underworld.

The astonishing thing about these materialised Irish Volunteers was their youth. The country

had been given into the keeping of boys, and even the leaders of the movement were nearly all young men. Elderly people shook their heads; but I believe the omen a good one, for Ireland suffers under the burden of her antiquity, and only young men can bring her a new life. One looks forward fearfully, but with hope, to the new Ireland that is being hammered into shape. Ploughboys and shop assistants wield the hammers.

The days passed, and the long hot summer drew to an end.

Auxiliaries and Black-and-Tans continued to drive in state to their daily dips in the sea, and one never again saw them with anything more formidable than a bath-towel round their necks. In course of time the British Government came to the conclusion that idleness in the erstwhile enemy land of Dublin was not well, and rumour said the bathers were to be sent away on leave. It is a fact that after a while the strange spectacle of these people come out of their wire cages and sitting unarmed and unharmed in open Crossley tenders with towels round their necks took place no more, and the sounds of lorry wheels were not heard again in the noble squares of Dublin city. But the memory of these people stays behind with Cromwell's memory, and Strongbow's memory.

I believe that the secret service also took its departure at this time, for that part of it which I knew, that is to say 47, made its exit.

We had a note one afternoon asking us to see

him off by the evening boat train. We went down in plenty of time. She was there beside him. He seemed the same as usual, neither greatly elated nor greatly set down at his departure, while she was unfeignedly glad to be away and said so.

"I'm glad you didn't make your bow without letting us know," I said.

"How many more years are you staying?" he asked.

"We came here to see it fixed up."

"It's going to be fixed up," he answered. "Temporarily, at any rate."

"Are you quite sure?"

He nodded, gloomily, I thought. "You'll find it fixed up at any price. But the Government won't have to pay a very big price. The extreme people won't want to take this; but the nation as a whole want it, and they'll help to see it through."

"Some time ago, one night it was," I said, "I met an old man waving about on two sticks and baying at the stars. He asked me if I'd like to know how the Irish question would be settled. I said certainly. He stopped waving on his two sticks, stopped baying at the stars, and cried out, 'The extremists will meet the extreme extremists in the Rotunda at Rutland Square, and there will be a final battle to the death. If nobody is left, then it will be settled.'"

"But," put in 47's wife, thankfully, "we shall not be there."

“We’re jolly glad we came over,” I said. “We’ve got some first-hand tips for running a revolution, and if the same sort of thing starts in another country one will know how much of the papers to believe. I hope things are going to hurry up and finish now, for we’re off, too, before long. I wish Ireland every good luck and a speedy growth to greatness, but I’m ready to transfer my attentions elsewhere.”

We had cut ourselves off from the others and were side by side. “You’ve no departing pangs?” I asked.

47 shrugged his shoulders. “Not really. One feels the usual regret at leaving places associated with pretty tumultuous hours in one’s life.” He turned and said with feeling, “I have only to stop at any street corner and those dark Christmas days come back. By gad, they wore one out while they lasted; but everything is over in the end. I’m glad to be off, though one makes acquaintances, friends even, that a fellow is sorry to lose, even on a job of this sort.”

“You can do your job and make friends?” I asked.

“Why not?” A moment after he said, “You get used to keeping your work entirely apart, a sort of falcon sitting on your wrist. You make friends like anybody else; but this hooded bird is waiting ready for the game when you start it. Or there’s some presence behind your chair, like the slave at a Roman general’s triumph, telling you

you are a servant, and greater than you is the Empire you serve."

I nodded.

"No," he exclaimed, "I wouldn't stay another day. My job here is done. I want to get to something ahead. I'm like that now. The wandering fever has got me for keeps. We'll have a spell when we get over, we're looking forward to it, and it'll be damn fine for a few weeks. We'll go and watch summer turn into autumn somewhere, and we'll be content enough until the old thing happens again. It's happened too often not to expect it once more. One will begin by getting restless and talking about a change of scene, then one will want to know exactly what is going on, the truth, not the stuff the newspapers dish you out. Then I shall begin wondering when I shall hear from headquarters."

"And about Christmas time," I interrupted, "when there's nothing but wind and rain, you will be working again, homeless, friendless, the whole catalogue of lesses. I sailed round Cape Horn once in a four-masted barque for the fun of the thing. It's the last thing I ever mean to do again. All the men were like me, thanking God when they saw land. But most of them had only been a few days ashore after six months at sea when they had had their fill of land. I left them disappearing into the wind and the dark."

A few minutes later the train had taken them away from us and we were on the way home.

Weeks passed with affairs still in the balance, and we began to talk of going. Public interest in the negotiations never abated. Most days of the week a patient crowd waited outside the Dublin Mansion House to see the Republican leaders come and go. Summer was drawing to an end, and the days were often wet; but the crowd never lost patience, and stood in lines marshalled by Republican police, who seemed as numerous as crows. There were constant rumours of a break in the Downing Street negotiations; but the longer the truce continued the more unready people were to return to old conditions.

The delegates came back from the preliminary London conference, and the first of the public meetings of the Dail was held in the Dublin Mansion House. Fitzgerald, the Minister of Propaganda, gave us tickets.

Long before the hour all Dublin was outside. All Dublin wanted to be inside; but there was not room for a tenth part of Dublin. The morning was wet; but the crowd kept its spirits and cheered at every excuse. A multitude of Republican police kept order. These people wore no uniform, and were very young; but arrangements inside and outside the Mansion House were admirable. The Republican police were still amateur policemen, and if a question was asked half a dozen of them sprang forward to answer it. One was overwhelmed with information.

The great round room was choked with people,

except for a roped-off space, full of easy seats, waiting the coming of the Dail deputies. The Speaker's chair stood beyond and above, and to one side was the Press gallery, and to the other places for distinguished visitors. An Indian in a pugaree was among those people.

A gallery, packed with more people, circled the room; higher than this, against the walls, were coats of arms of all past Lord Mayors. In Ireland, that land of imagination, all Lord Mayors have armorial bearings. A man with a flashlight camera was getting his apparatus ready.

There was a burst of cheering, and we rose to our feet. The applause lasted for a couple of minutes, and then died down like a wind subsiding, and behold all the empty seats were filled. All over the place people were digging and tapping one another, and pointing and whispering, and staring and asking. Many of the Dail deputies had been nobodies before they went on the run; but after the day of their disappearance from among common men, their names had flowered like plants in a forcing house.

Eamonn De Valera, the President of the Republic, sat at the end of the front bench. A tall man with a good figure, and a speed of movement that told of his foreign blood. After years of storm had he brought his ship safely into harbour? Never had he been placed higher in popular affection than then, and perhaps never would be placed so high again.

On his right, so close that their elbows touched, was a greater than he, Arthur Griffith, the father of Sinn Féin. They had asked him in the beginning to be the first President of the Republic; but he had refused the laurel wreath, seeing greater freedom in a secondary position, for the man placed in the higher seat must dance at the bidding of the crowd. A man nearly as broad as he was high, a cold man, a man with a great head, he sat motionless all that morning, never speaking, twisting his moustache now and then, oblivious of the public eye, seeming content to be overlooked, satisfied to see about him this meeting, which his eloquent pen and his devotion had done so much to bring about.

On his right, touching elbows again, was the man whom public imagination had lifted highest of all. The man was Michael Collins, on whose head had been a reward of four thousand pounds, the Minister of Finance, as he was now called, "a certain minister" as he had been referred to in conversation during the terror; Mike, as he was affectionately known to his followers, Michael the Mild as the Ulster Press bitterly described him.

He was a young man on the way to corpulence. His skin had a deadly pallor. His face was large and handsome, and yet one fell into a muse, wondering was it a cruel face, or was it a sensual face, or was it a feminine face in spite of its strength, for something was wrong with it. Now and again he tossed his head back with all the charm of a boy. There were legends that he had gone about

as a woman, that he had passed into officers' clubs disguised as an officer, worming secrets out of people. He would have made a giant woman. I think these tales were legends and no more.

There may have been men present who had worked as hard and suffered as much as those three ; but those names meant most to the public. The remainder of the deputies looked what they were, several score of men, mostly young, mostly from the lower middle class, some few elected for their ability, the majority chosen because they were in prison or on the run at the time of the elections, and their election was a gesture of defiance to the British authority. When presently they spoke, some of them were inarticulate, and, no doubt, in good time the same popular feeling that raised them up will set them down from their seats, and put others more fitted in their places.

But whether they stay there or go back to private life, responsibility has put an early mark on them, and they have learnt lessons while they are young which most men do not learn until middle age.

Above them all, filling the Speaker's chair, lanky, folded like an idol, sat Professor MacNeil. He rested a hand on either arm of the chair and never stirred, even when he growled out a few words in Irish that seemed to come from a subterranean passage.

Leave them there. Those men have brought Ireland to the point on the road where she now

stands. They have made her dream dreams and have shown her splendid visions. They took on a great responsibility. Can they guide her the rest of the way to peace and greatness? They must be trusted. But the glass is troubled.

Ireland has become self-conscious. Youth, for a while at least, has taken the place of age. The glass is troubled and wants clearing; but youth can do most things.

CHAPTER XXVIII

LAST OF IRELAND

"God save us!" Mrs. O'Grady exclaimed to Himself when she heard of the truce, and to this day I have not made up my mind whether the exclamation was one of hope or despair.

She had summered in the stifling basement and had grown thin. She toiled hopelessly upstairs with sweat upon her forehead, she limped hopelessly downstairs, groaning with the burden of living, as she stooped to gather into her hands some particularly obvious trail of dust left by her broom.

As she grew lean the man in the street filled out with the new confidence of the truce. He sunned himself at the shop doors, and heard unmoved the sounds of motors back-firing.

One of the avatars who roamed Dublin and called on us now and then, grew prophetic over a lobster salad in the little flat.

"Ireland's only hope now is from the North," he said thoughtfully. "The Dail is becoming respectable. It has lost its soul."

"You expected them to reject the terms?"

“Not at all. I expected them to accept. Sinn Fein has grown respectable. The North is the only hope.” He put a lobster claw on the carpet and brought his great foot down on it. “That’s a sight you wouldn’t see out of Ireland,” he said: “an avatar cracking a lobster’s claw.”

“The carpet belongs to Desmond Fitzgerald,” I answered. “So you have the spectacle of an avatar cracking a lobster’s claw on a Cabinet Minister’s carpet, a sight which certainly could not be seen outside Ireland.”

“It’s like this,” he continued. “Ireland is one of the spiritual poles of the earth, and the salvation of the world must come through her. The mould of Western civilisation must be broken up. It’s rotten. If Ireland can stay as she is and not sink back into the materialism of other countries, she has the power to strike the blow that will shatter the present system. There is no sham in the North, the Ulsterman is fundamental. He holds the germ of spirituality in him like every Irishman does. The North will come to blows with the South. That will start the whole thing. It’s going to be a bloody fight.”

“I suppose the Irishman’s spiritual,” I answered. “He is certainly always saying he is. Personally I believe he mixes up spirituality with an astonishing ability to shift his point of view and make it fit the occasion. Look how the truce is being broken every day in the most barbarous way, and no doubt the truce breakers salve their

consciences by saying they want a Republic and not a Free State, and that they are holding to a spiritual ideal. You people can be material enough. Irish landladies can hold their own with any landladies in the world."

"The trouble will start quickly," the avatar announced. "It will start over the boundary commission, I don't know how I know, but something tells me. A clash between England and America will follow, the colonies will be divided among themselves. The British Empire will go. Europe will go. In Ireland, nursed through all the chaos, will be a small group of people who will undertake the reconstruction of the world."

"I'll wait and see if it comes off," I said doubtfully. "Ireland's rather a small place to be as important as that. Personally, I think she's too old to influence the world very much now. Her psyche was arrested in the days of Cuchulan. She's pagan at heart. Christianity fits her like a hair shirt. She's ages old. You want a new people to regenerate a world."

"You're right. I feel the pull of pagan worship."

"I've been told that all through the west of Ireland the peasants still take their old pagan relics out of hiding and worship them as soon as the priest is out of sight."

"It's true. Don't you feel the very mountains of Ireland are sacred? How can a people like us throw off our past?"

“Shoddy days, shoddy days,” Himself answered, coming out of a trance in the corner. “Let’s hope the world isn’t too old to get better. I was at A. E.’s on Sunday evening. Madam Markievicz was there, and Darrel Figgis, and James Stephens the poet, and the rest of them, and some one brought up De Valera’s letter to Lloyd George, the one where he says that Lloyd George offers Ireland margarine when Ireland wants butter. Madam Markievicz excused the use of such phraseology in political correspondence. ‘Ah, Constance, Constance,’ A. E. remonstrated, shaking his head. Then Figgis, who has the happy knack of getting in a thrust all round, said, ‘The days seem to have gone when Cromwell chose Milton for his secretary, so that his despatches might be written in the best Latin of the period.’ The thought that De Valera had a poorer literary taste than Cromwell upset us so that we all went home. If the new world is to come, let it come soon.”

The avatar rose to take his departure. “Good-bye,” he said. “It’s an awful thing to be the only sane man in the world.”

Mrs. Slaney was full of rage at the iniquities of Lloyd George when she first heard the British offer ; but after a talk with Father Murphy, who pointed out that the terms were all that Ireland desired, she shifted her ground, and became a staunch Free Stater. From then on her fear was lest the Republicans should upset the Free State and send Ireland into anarchy.

The last day in our old flat came. Mrs. O'Grady shook hands with bright round tears rolling after one another down her face.

"God save us!" she said, "but I feel as if my own children were walking out of the house this very minute. Indeed, and I never looked to see the day when you would go."

Later came the good-bye to Ireland. It sank into the sea. Its own peculiar soft atmosphere hung over it and passed into a sea haze.

Two days later I was having tea with a friend in London.

"My dear," she said, "what an awful time you must have had. Of course you were awfully brave to stay."

"There was no special danger if you didn't interfere," I assured her.

"No danger? But they are murderers?"

"There are plenty of murderers in the world, and they aren't all Sinn Feiners."

"But they murdered women. Look at the women they shot, and by order, too. More than one woman. We shot no women. And look at their terrible Sinn Fein regiment, the Black-and-Tans."

"But, my dear, the Black-and-Tans were British Government police," I gasped.

It was no use. She smiled in a superior manner.

"You think I don't know," she said, "but I've followed every line in the papers about the Irish question ever since you were over there. I was

always so afraid you might have been shot in an ambush, and I should so hate not seeing it. I remember seeing in the paper—I cut out the paragraph to show you, but I lost it—that the majority of the Black-and-Tans were Irishmen.”

“ But a Government force.”

“ Nonsense. I’m sure you’re mistaken. I must look for the paragraph. More tea ? ”

Years of Sinn Fein propaganda had accomplished no more than that.

CHAPTER XXIX

LOOKING BACK

OUT of the whirlpool of lies, misunderstandings, prevarications, distortions, inaccuracies and passions which go to the making up of history, can one secure some of the causes and effects connected with the Irish struggle since the Sinn Fein movement put aside pacific methods and became militant? Are there conclusions to be drawn?

Three separate traditions seem to have been welded together for the purpose of uniting Ireland in a common cause. One tradition is the political tradition that Ireland possesses a national individuality, and must continue to struggle for the expression of that individuality until it is obtained. A second tradition is the Gaelic tradition, that Ireland must revive and cherish the Gaelic spirit, the Gaelic culture, the Gaelic language and literature. The third tradition is the tradition that internal affairs must be altered and improved. These three traditions came together in the Sinn Fein movement. The Irish Republic was to be an independent republic, it was to be as far as

possible a Gaelic republic, and as a state it was to be an example to the world.

Each generation of Irish leaders, to grind their patriotic axes, have insisted that Ireland is a conquered country, suffering the fate of the conquered. The statement is too sweeping. Ireland has been part of a united kingdom with a common legislation. She has suffered to a certain extent from the too centralised parliament at Westminster, where her local affairs have frequently been crowded out. She has been legislated for as an industrial country when she is in reality an agricultural country. She has suffered from absentee landlords, another effect of centralisation. She has suffered in other ways ; but she has suffered most of all from herself, from her inability ever to become united, to hold an individual opinion, to cease being hag-ridden by religion, which has starved her educationally.

There have been bills passed for the rest of the British Isles which have not been passed in Ireland owing to the veto of the Catholic Church. One has only to compare the educational differences of the Irish people and the Scottish people, two nations of the same size, to comprehend what a heavy reckoning the Catholic Church will have to answer to some day.

The Catholic Church has allowed ignorance and superstition. A certain intolerance can also be laid at its door, but not in any great degree. But in Ulster, Protestant Ulster, Protestantism has bred

a ferocity of intolerance, which is astounding in the twentieth century. Ireland staggers about with these two religions upon her back.

The old cry, Home Rule Rome Rule, was probably a false one. One of the results of the struggle for Irish independence has been the breaking of the power of the Catholic Church. The young men have in part educated themselves, and prevailing conditions have, whether for better or worse, matured their characters before their time. There is still a profound reverence and love for the Church; but the day has gone when it can dictate to the nation. While Sinn Fein was in its infancy the Church condemned the movement, when it grew strong the Church had to walk beside it with trembling steps and grave forebodings. The young generation of priests threw themselves into the Republican movement body and soul.

But Ireland is still hag-ridden. So long as North and South take their religions as violently as they do, the two parts of the Irish nation can never come together. It does not look as if North or South will relinquish its belief. Protestantism fits the vigorous masculine Northerner, Catholicism suits the feminine, imaginative, easy-going Southerner. Because Ireland is Ireland the two religions make a fence which keep the peoples apart. It is a calamity. What a people might the intermarriage of North and South produce!

So this fated nation has never had a single voice, and the British Government has perpetually

listened to several contrary requests in place of one demand. The result has been that those things which ought to have been done have been left undone. One of the things which ought to have been done was to give Ireland such few original privileges as she asked a very long time ago.

Let us pass on.

The history of Ireland has been a series of periods of agitation, sometimes culminating in open rebellion, alternating with periods of quiet, at the end of which time political firebrands once more bludgeoned the people into discontent. There had been such a period of calm, and then came the birth of the Gaelic League and a Celtic renaissance to herald in Sinn Fein. It was a bellows for the Sinn Fein spark.

The manner in which the British Government dealt with the Sinn Fein situation when it did become a menace showed lack of imagination and lack of information. Two errors in policy were made, and in the second case the error was persisted in. Irishmen of all shades of political opinion have informed me that the irresolute conduct of the Cabinet over the Irish conscription issue during the European war was directly responsible for subsequent happenings. The young men of Ireland had become impregnated with the bellicose spirit which was abroad in the rest of Europe, and that spirit must finally find a way out through some channel or other. A firm conscription policy would have caused it to flow outwards

to the discomfiture of the Empire's enemies ; the irresolution of the Government caused it to flow inwards. The British Cabinet was harassed at the time, and did not dare to put the issue to the test. The youth of Ireland took the Government change of mind as a sign of weakness, all the world knows with what results. Irishmen of all political opinions have assured me conscription could have been carried out.

The second case has been happening before my own eyes during the last eighteen months, and has been evidence of the lack of imagination and the little knowledge of the Irish temperament in Government circles.

There were two alternatives for dealing with the Republican movement. One was to strike it a hammer blow while it was in its infancy, using all the impedimenta of war if necessary, aiming at speed in all things. The other alternative was to be generous and give a satisfactory measure of Home Rule.* The course the Government did adopt was doomed to failure. The Irish are a sensitive people and a spirited people. Public opinion in Ireland was dead against the Easter week rising of 1916, the British soldiers were cheered when they arrived ; but four or five years of repression, of Irishmen hunted by Englishmen, of

* The Government would not contemplate the first alternative. It was from the beginning most loath to hurt unnecessarily. It was most reluctant to punish. This quality of humanity has been denied by its enemies ; but it would be unjust here to pass it over.

mistaken arrests, of wrong houses raided, of troops tramping Irish streets, of police and more police, brought about the alteration in feeling. From my personal observation I am under the impression that the British Government was continually being misinformed on the progress made against the Republicans, and while, like a cancer, Sinn Fein was sending out new shoots about the country, the British Cabinet was officially told the movement was collapsing. Thus the matter was spun out, and first in tens, then in hundreds, finally in thousands, Loyalists went over to the other camp. I saw it for myself. It was obvious to anybody with eyes.

The Government's influence was further weakened through its affection for Ulster. Though there was repression in the South, repression which was reluctant, but which grew more and more vigorous as difficulties increased, the Government had not the moral strength to adopt a firm attitude to the North. To be found with arms in the South and to be found with arms in the North was a different matter. Absolute impartiality throughout the length and breadth of the country and iron firmness in the beginning might have done much to mend matters; but the Government proved human, and was unable to belabour a man for loving it.

Again, the Government was hampered by the spell which fell on the civilian population at the mention of Sinn Fein. The Republican movement

manifested itself as a gigantic and spreading secret society, and the civilian population was as putty in its hands. It was illuminating to the outsider to discover with what ease a small organised, ruthless body of men can overawe and control a vast disorganised body.

It is time to speak of the type of war waged. The Republicans called the struggle a war, and used war's phraseology in connection with it ; but it never assumed the proportions of war. Call it a war and say that it was one of the most inglorious wars ever fought. Own at the same time that it is difficult to suggest what other means of aggression Sinn Fein could have adopted in the face of its military inferiority, and acknowledge also on behalf of the Crown Forces that there was no means of striking at the enemy other than by reprisal. Loyalist and Republican were caught in the web of circumstance. If one judges the struggle by its outer manifestations, it astonishingly lacks elements of glory ; but if one searches below the surface one finds alike in Republican and Loyalist the usual qualities bred of war, energy, courage, fortitude, sacrifice.

That is in the past now, and Ireland is in the hopeful present. Sinn Fein has left Ireland with her internal affairs in her own hands.

The door of an enlightened and ordered future is here : it is not yet open ; but the key has been given into the hands of Irishmen. Will they throw it wide open, or will they stay arguing outside ?

Is there to be another Kali Yuga, a dark age, because Irishmen have split again? Let Ireland remember the words of "a certain minister" and stop talking and get on with the work. She is still drunk with nationality. Let her work off her intoxication as quickly as she can, keeping nationality's choice qualities, a fine inspiration, a noble ideal; but rooting out the faults of nationality, provincialism, prejudice, narrowness. She has won her separation; let her not now set about working herself too much out of the world. To have a world influence, to produce a world people, she must stay within the world.

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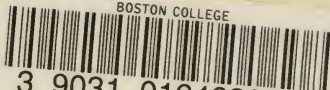
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